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II Shri Hari II

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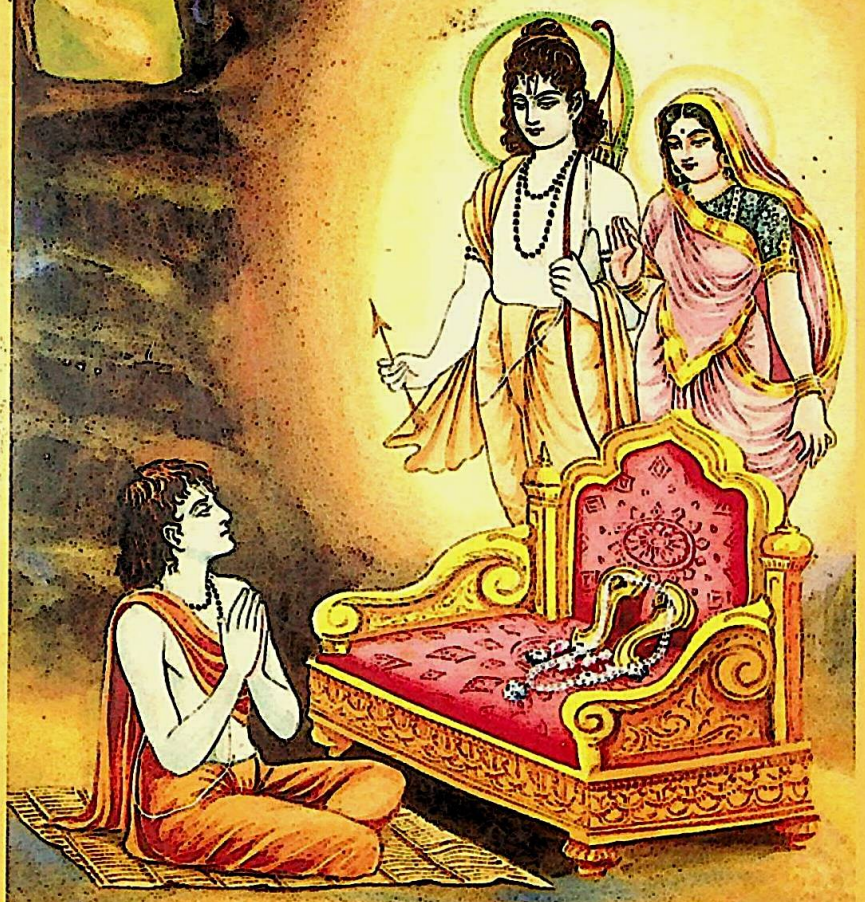
Some Ideal Characters of Rāmāyaṇa



Jayadayal Goyandka

1284

II Śrī Hari II

Some Ideal Characters of Rāmāyaṇa

tvameva mātā ca pitā tvameva
tvameva bandhuśca sakhā tvameva
tvameva vidyā draviṇaṁ tvameva
tvameva sarvaṁ mama devadeva

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव
त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव।
त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणं त्वमेव
त्वमेव सर्वं मम देवदेव॥

Jayadayal Goyandka

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Publisher's Note

We are happy to present this book 'Some Ideal Characters of Rāmāyaṇa', the English version of Hindi book 'रामायणके कुछ आदर्श पात्र' by Brahmalīna Śrī Jayadayāla Goyandakā, in the hands of our readers. This book is certainly capable of arousing the sentiment of love and devotion in the lotus feet of Lord Rāma.

We hope it will serve its purpose and the readers will receive it with usual affection and get spiritually benefited.

Publisher

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Maryādā Puruṣottama Rāma

It is no exaggeration to say that till this day there has been no other protector of social decorum like Lord Rāma, the crest jewel of Raghu dynasty. Śrī Rāma was the supreme *Brahma* Himself. He incarnated Himself only for safeguarding *Dharma* and liberating masses. But He tried always to present Himself before the society as a man of ideal conduct and character. By reading and hearing and remembering His sportive acts there rise in the heart the waves of highly pious thoughts and the mind gets overwhelmed. Every act of His is just immitable. Śrī Rāma was an ocean of moral qualities. Qualities like truthfulness, gentleheartedness, kindness, forgiveness, softness, steadfastness, valour, serenity, knowledge of armament, industriousness, fearlessness, modesty, calmness, endurance, dispassion, self-restraint, desirelessness, diplomacy, an unearthly glow, love, renunciation, preserving of social decorum, monogamy, care for subjects, devotion for Brahmans, filial devotion, devotion to *Guru,* brotherly affection, friendly traits, affection for whosoever comes to His refuge, simplicity, shrewdness, keeping promise, giving patronage to the pious, suppressing the wicked, total absense of enmity, popularity, absence of back-biting, versatility of knowledge, knowledge of religion, observance of piety, sanctity etc., were fully developed in Him.

Nowhere in the world are found so many qualities centred in a single person. In the *Bāla Kāṇḍa* and in the beginning of *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa,* there is vivid description of His merits. It is worth reading.

His extra-ordinary ideal treatment towards His parents, brothers and servants and subjects, friends when remembered makes one immersed in a blissful joy. Popularity as Śrī Rāma commanded is nowhere seen. At the time when He was playing His sportive pastimes, there was no such person who was not spellbound by his affectionate and sweet behaviour.

The shockingly rude and harsh treatment meted out to Śrī Rāma by Kaikeyī was all designed by the divine will and inspired by gods for the supreme good of the world. It does not prove that Kaikeyī did not love Rāma because when Mantharā tried to misguide Kaikeyī conspiringly, Kaikeyī gave reply to her—

धर्मज्ञो गुणवान् दान्तः कृतज्ञः सत्यवाञ्छुचिः।
रामो राजसुतो ज्येष्ठो यौवराज्यमतोऽर्हति॥
भ्रातॄन् भृत्यांश्च दीर्घायुः पितृवत् पालयिष्यति।
संतप्यसे कथं कुब्जे श्रुत्वा रामाभिषेचनम्॥

× × ×

यथा वै भरतो मान्यस्तथा भूयोऽपि राघवः।
कौसल्यातोऽतिरिक्तं च मम शुश्रूषते बहु॥
राज्यं यदि हि रामस्य भरतस्यापि तत्तदा।
मन्यते हि यथाऽऽत्मानं यथा भ्रातॄंस्तु राघवः॥

(Vāl. II. 8. 14-15, 18-19)

Apart from being the knower of *Dharma,*

meritorious, having his senses under control, grateful, truthful, and pure Rāma is eldest son of the king. Thus it is he who is entitled to be Prince Regent, living a long life he will look after his brothers and servants like a father. I fail to understand why you are so disturbed to learn about his coronation. To me Bharata and Rāma command equal respect, rather Rāma commands more respect. He is more serviceable to me even than to (his mother) Kausalyā. If Rāma gets the throne, take it as if Bharata is enthroned because Rāma treats his brothers like his own self. What a parental affection! How much love, affection and sense of confidence did Kaikeyī have in Rāma? This makes it clear that the rude behaviour of Kaikeyī towards Rāma was in accordance with divine will and it was not natural with her.

Devotion of Rāma to his mothers—

The devotion of Rāma to his mothers was ideal one. As it is impossible to fully describe it so only a few points are noted. It is unnecessary to talk of his treatment towards Kausalyā and other motherly ladies, even to Kaikeyī who treated him so harshly, his behaviour was always full of respect and devotion, while coming back from the palace of mother Kausalyā, he says to the angry Lakṣmaṇa—his brother—

यस्या मदभिषेकार्थे मानसं परितप्यते।
माता नः सा यथा न स्यात् सविशङ्का तथा कुरु॥
तस्याः शङ्कामयं दुःखं मुहूर्तमपि नोत्सहे।
मनसि प्रतिसंजातं सौमित्रेऽहमुपेक्षितुम्॥

न बुद्धिपूर्वं नाबुद्धं स्मरामीह कदाचन।
मातृणां वा पितुर्वाहं कृतमल्पं च विप्रियम्॥

(*Vāl.* II. 22. 6—8)

Lakṣmaṇa, do the same which may not create suspicion on me in the mind of mother Kaikeyī who is greatly disturbed on account of my coronation. I cannot afford to ignore even for a *"Muhūrta"* the pain in her mind created by suspicion. I do not remember to have ever done anything knowingly or unknowingly against the wishes of my mothers or father even in the least.

Besides there are many more instances of Rāma's devotion to his mothers available. While coming back from Chitrakoot, Bharata was advised by Rāma not to take into mind the doings of Kaikeyī which she did propelled by desire or greed for kingdom. Your treatment towards her must be as a venerable mother deserves. He also instructed Śatrughna swearing by his own self and Sītā never to show anger to her and to serve her always. While in the forest Lakṣmaṇa once criticised Kaikeyī, then Rāma admonished him not to condemn her, this clearly shows what type of faith and devotion Rāma had for his mothers. On the occasion of his departure for the forest, the other queens of king Daśaratha also wept and said—

कृत्येष्वचोदितः पित्रा सर्वस्यान्तःपुरस्य च।
गतिश्च शरणं चासीत् स रामोऽद्य प्रवत्स्यति॥
कौसल्यायां यथा युक्तो जनन्यां वर्तते सदा।
तथैव वर्ततेऽस्मासु जन्मप्रभृति राघवः॥

(Vāl. II. 20. 2-3)

Rāma who even though unasked by his father to attend to any job, was the only refuge for the entire gynaeceam, will go to exilement. He treated us with the same care with which he treated Kausalyā.

What else will be a better proof of devotion to his Mothers?

Devotion to his father—

In the same way the parental devotion of Rāma was unique. It is not unknown to the readers of *Rāmāyaṇa* what an enthusiasm, courage and firm faith he had in obeying the commands of his father. He tells mother Kaikeyī in conversation—

अहं हि वचनाद् राज्ञः पतेयमपि पावके॥
भक्षयेयं विषं तीक्ष्णं पतेयमपि चार्णवे।
(Vāl. II. 18. 28-29)

न ह्यतो धर्मचरणं किञ्चिदस्ति महत्तरम्।
यथा पितरि शुश्रूषा तस्य वा वचनक्रिया॥
(Vāl. II. 19.22)

I can jump into the fire, can drink deadly poison and can throw myself into the sea because there is no greater *Dharma* in the world than the service of the father and obeying his orders.

There are so many other utterances like this. After that he said to mother Kausalyā also—

नास्ति शक्तिः पितुर्वाक्यं समतिक्रमितुं मम।
प्रसादये त्वां शिरसा गन्तुमिच्छाम्यहं वनम्॥
(Vāl. II. 21. 30)

I pray with my head at your feet to get you pleased. It is beyond my capacity to overrule the orders

of my father. Therefore I do want to go to the forest.

Apart from this while talking to Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and many other *Ṛṣis* he has said so much about devotion to father. In the brief narration of his childly pastimes also it has been said that Rāma always served his father.

Vow of monogamy—

His vow of monogamy was also highly ideal. Śrī Rāma has never accepted even in dream any woman other than Sītā.

After exiling Sītā when He was initiated for *Yajña* and needed a wife, He got a golden statue of Sītā and performed the *Yajña.* If he so wished He could remarry at that time. It would have saved Him even from columny in the world. But no. He was *Maryādā Puruṣottama.* He had to present an example for the world that monogamy for man is as necessary as chastity for a woman. The relation of wife and husband is meant for practising *Dharma* and not only for enjoyment.

By reading the episode after Sītā's abduction one can have an idea of how extremely Rāma loved Sītā. Even though Śrī Rāma was supremely brave, steadfast and enduring yet at that time like a man who had gone mad due to the pangs of separation from his partner, He went from forest to forest asking beasts and birds, plants and creepers, mountains about the whereabouts of Sītā. At times he becomes unconscious and falls down saying—Sītā, oh Sītā. The

description of that period is full of pathos and extremely heart rending.

Brotherly Love—

Śrī Rāma's love for his brothers was incomparable. He loved them very much right from the childhood. He always tried to protect them and keep them happy. All the four brothers moved around together on their horses. When Śrī Rāma got any good dish, He distributed it first among them and only then He took it in His own use. Although Śrī Rāma loved all of them equally yet Lakṣmaṇa had more attachment to Śrī Rāma. He did not like to be away from Rāma even for a short while. Separation from Rāma was unbearable to him and this is why he accompanied Rāma in the forest in order to protect the sacrifice of Viśwāmitra. There after killing the *Rākṣasas* the two brothers went to Janakapur. The incident of breaking bow took place. After that the preparations for marriage were made and the four brothers were married simultaneously. After the marriage the four brothers came to Ayodhya and lived with love and affection.

After sometime Bharata and Śatrughna went alongwith their maternal uncle to his kingdom. Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa attended the state affairs as asked by their father. The inhabitants of the city and outsiders like Brahmans etc., were enchanted with the affectionate treatment, his qualities and nature. Then king Daśaratha decided to coronate Śrī Rāma on the throne with the permission of *Guru* Vasiṣṭha and the

consent of the subjects. Having heard from Daśaratha about his coronation Śrī Rāma went to the palace of the mother Kausalyā. Sumitrā and Lakṣmaṇa also were there. Śrī Rāma tells his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa—

लक्ष्मणेमां मया सार्धं प्रशाधि त्वं वसुन्धराम्।
द्वितीयं मेऽन्तरात्मानं त्वामियं श्रीरुपस्थिता॥
सौमित्रे भुङ्क्ष्व भोगांस्त्वमिष्टान् राज्यफलानि च।
जीवितं चापि राज्यं च त्वदर्थमभिकामये॥

(Vāl. II. 4. 43-44)

"Lakṣmaṇa you share with me the administration of the earth, you are another soul of mine. It is you who have got the *Rājalakṣmī* (the charge of the kingdom). The delight of Sumitrā! enjoy as you wish and look after the state administration. I want the kingdom and my life also just for you." After this the dramatic scene changed. As desired by mother Kaikeyī, His coronation changed into exilement to the forest. When called through Sumantra Śrī Rāma went to the palace and learnt from Kaikeyī about her boons and expressed his happiness over it. After that he went to mother Kausalyā to bid farewell to her. There also a great deal of discussion took place but Śrī Rāma did not utter even a single word against Bharata or Kaikeyī. On the contrary he praised Bharata and consoled the mother and said—"Bharata will serve you just like I did." At the same time while convincing Sītā to remain at home he says—

भ्रातृपुत्रसमौ चापि द्रष्टव्यौ च विशेषतः।
त्वया भरतशत्रुघ्नौ प्राणैः प्रियतरौ मम॥

(Vāl. II. 26.33)

"My brothers Bharata and Śatrughna are to me, dearer even than my life. O Sītā! Therefore you should treat them as your brothers and sons or even more than that."

After knowing the tides of exilement, Lakṣmaṇa was aggrieved and infuriated. Śrī Rāma consoled him also through sweet and tender words full of morality and *Dharma*. Then Lakṣmaṇa when requested to permit him to accompany Śrī Rāma argued to him for staying there behind and said—

स्निग्धो धर्मरतो धीरः सततं सत्पथे स्थितः।
प्रियः प्राणसमो वश्यो विजेयश्च सखा च मे॥

(Vāl. II. 31. 10)

"Lakṣmaṇa! You are my beloved, religious, steadfast and always follow the right path. You are dear to me like my very life breath, subordinate to me, obedient and friendly."

After too much convincing when Lakṣmaṇa did not give up his loveful insisting then the Lord agreed to take him alongwith Him in order to appease Lakṣmaṇa. While living in forest Śrī Rāma made effort in everyway to keep Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā confortable and happy.

When Lakṣmaṇa learnt about the arrival of Bharata with his army to Chitrakoot he uttered some unbecoming words for Bharata because he was perturbed due to

his excessive love for Rāma. Then Śrī Rāma said while praising Bharata—

धर्ममर्थं च कामं च पृथिवीं चापि लक्ष्मण।
इच्छामि भवतामर्थे एतत् प्रतिशृणोमि ते॥
भ्रातृणां संग्रहार्थं च सुखार्थं चापि लक्ष्मण।
राज्यमप्यहमिच्छामि सत्येनायुधमालभे॥
यद् विना भरतं त्वां च शत्रुघ्नं वापि मानद।
भवेन्मम सुखं किञ्चिद् भस्म तत् कुरुतां शिखी॥
स्नेहेनाक्रान्तहृदयः शोकेनाकुलितेन्द्रियः।
द्रष्टुमभ्यागतो ह्येष भरतो नान्यथाऽऽगतः॥

(Vāl.II. 97. 5-6, 8, 11)

"Lakṣmaṇa, I very truly swear by my weapons that I need even *Dharma, Artha, Kāma* and the entire earth only for the sake of you all. Lakṣmaṇa, even this kingdom I regard as enjoyable for my brothers and to be for their comforts. And my modest brother, be it gone to the dogs if anybody provides any comfort to me without you, Bharata and Śatrughna. I think as soon as Bharata came to learn my exilement, the heart of Bharata has been filled up to the brim with love; his sense-organs became tense. This is why he is coming to see me. There is no other motive for his arrival.

Apart from this he said this much also—"Bharata cannot even think of doing anything against me. If you want the kingdom I would ask Bharata to hand it over to you."

Whatever suspicion Lakṣmaṇa had against Bharata, was removed after hearing these words.

After that when Bharata reached the hermitage and

rolled at the feet of Śrī Rāma then Śrī Rāma saw him. He raised with his own hands and embraced. He seated him in his lap and smelled his head. He made inquiries with respect about the recent situation and said—"Why have you had matted locks and garment fit for ascetics?" Bharata tried his best to take Rāma back to Ayodhya. The entire gathering was astonished to see the behaviour and love of Bharata and Rāma. Eventually when Bharata knew for certain that Śrī Rāma would not break his promise, then Bharata requested Śrī Rāma to give his *Pādukās* (wooden sandals). Śrī Rāma acceded to his request and gave him the *Pādukās* and sent him back. Bharata held those *Pādukās* reverentially at his head and came back to Ayodhya. He enthroned those *Pādukās* and only with their permission he looked after the state administration and in ascetic guise just like Śrī Rāma. He settled down in Nandigram.

After that Sītā was abducted. Lanka was invaded, fierce battle with Rāvaṇa started. In course of battle when one day Lakṣmaṇa swooned struck by the missile of Rāvaṇa, Śrī Rāma wept bitterly which shows how much affection Śrī Rāma had for his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa. There Śrī Rāma said—

यथैव मां वनं यान्तमनुयाति महाद्युतिः।
अहमप्यनुयास्यामि तथैवैनं यमक्षयम्॥
इष्टबन्धुजनो नित्यं मां स नित्यमनुव्रतः।
इमामवस्थां गमितो राक्षसैः कूटयोधिभिः॥

(Vāl. VI. 101.13-14)

"Just as the greatly splendrous Lakṣmaṇa followed me while coming to the forest in the same way now I will follow him to the abode of Yama. He had always been dear to me and a follower of mine. O! These deceitful *Rākṣasas* have brought him in this condition."

It was only proper and befitting to weep for the brother who was prepared to abandon everything and even to die and undergo all sorts of suffering but by showing the limit of grief on this occasion Śrī Rāma taught a very good lesson of brotherly affection.

Getting *Sañjīvanī* (the life saving herb) brought through Hanumān Suṣena cured Śrī Lakṣmaṇa. In the battle Rāvaṇa was killed. Lanka was conquered. Lord Rāma got ready for Ayodhya. At that time Vibhīṣaṇa requested with all respect and love to stay there for a few days more. Then Śrī Rāma replied—

न खल्वेतन्न कुर्यां ते वचनं राक्षसेश्वर।
तं तु मे भ्रातरं द्रष्टुं भरतं त्वरते मनः॥
मां निवर्तयितुं योऽसौ चित्रकूटमुपागतः।
शिरसा याचतो यस्य वचनं न कृतं मया॥

(Vāl. VI.121. 18-19)

O Lord of *Rākṣasas!* It is impossible to overrule your request but my mind is restless for meeting my brother Bharata who came up to Chitrakoot and requested me with his head bowed down to go back and I refused to do so (how can I make any delay in meeting my brother Bharata who is to me dearer than my life) etc.

After this by aircraft Śrī Rāma and Sītā alongwith Lakṣmaṇa and other friends reached Ayodhya. There also while meeting Bharata he showed his unique brotherly love. In the state administration also Śrī Rāma always consulted his brothers. He tried in every way to comfort and please them.

Once some *Ṛṣis* perplexed by the tortures at the hands of Lavaṇāsura, requested the Lord to kill him, the Lord put a question in the court about who would kill Lavaṇāsura. Who should be entrusted with the job? Bharata, at once offered himself with great zeal and enthusiasm. Now Śatrughna reacted in this way—Śrī Bharata had done so many things; has suffered a lot for you. Moreover he is senior. While, I the servant, am available, this job should not be given to him. It is I sir, who should be permitted to do this job. Agreeing to the proposal Śrī Rāma said—"In that case you must hold the charge of that kingdom, do not put any counter arguments. Śatrughna did not like the idea. He repented very much but as it was Rāma's order so he accepted, only Rāma could do it that he compelled his younger brother Śatrughna to hold charge of a state.

Afterward when Rāma had to abandon Lakṣmaṇa under the pressure of his own vow, then the separation of Lakṣmaṇa became unbearable to Him. The poet says there—

विसृज्य लक्ष्मणं रामो दुःखशोकसमन्वितः।
पुरोधसं मन्त्रिणश्च नैगमांश्चेदमब्रवीत्॥

अद्य राज्येऽभिषेक्ष्यामि भरतं धर्मवत्सलम्।
अयोध्यायाः पतिं वीरं ततो यास्याम्यहं वनम्॥
प्रवेशयत संभारान् मा भूत् कालात्ययो यथा।
अद्यैवाहं गमिष्यामि लक्ष्मणेन गतां गतिम्॥

(Vāl. VII.107.1—3)

"By abandoning Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma was engulfed into sorrow and grief. Summoning His priest, ministers and scholars of the *Vedas* He said—"I shall coronate the brave Bharata given to piety on the throne and then go to forest. Let all necessary preparations be made. There should be no delay as I wish to go today itself where Lakṣmaṇa has gone."

Bharata condemned the kingship and said—"I on my part, want absolutely nothing apart from you. Therefore, please, permit me also to accompany you." After that on the suggestion of Bharata, Śatrughna was also called from Mathura and putting an end to His humanly sports He alongwith His brothers went to His final abode.

It is just an introductory description of Rāma's brotherly love. Accepting kingship just for the sake of brothers; feeling extreme pleasure at the proposal of Bharata's coronation and giving up His claim; having usual affection to Kaikeyī, the mother of Bharata for whose sake His own enthronement was withheld; paying encomiums to Bharata unreservingly; admonishing Lakṣmaṇa when he doubted and got angry with Bharata; being ready to die when Lakṣmaṇa was fatally wounded by *Śakti;* teaching piety to His

brothers from time to time; having selfless love for all; compelling Śatrughna to hold kingship; unable to bear the separation of Lakṣmaṇa, departing for His supreme abode etc.,—from all these ideal behaviours of brotherly affection of Rāma, all of us may take proper lesson.

Friendly Love—

Śrī Rāma had incomparable love for His friends also. He regarded as nothing what He did for His friends but highlighted even the slightest act of the friends and praised. Here a small example is cited. After his enthronement in Ayodhya, while seeing off the monkeys he called the chieftens near him and casting an affectionate glance at them he accosted them in sweet and fine tone.

सुहृदो मे भवन्तश्च शरीरं भ्रातरस्तथा॥
युष्माभिरुद्धृतश्चाहं व्यसनात् काननौकसः।
धन्यो राजा च सुग्रीवो भवद्भिः सुहृदां वरैः॥

(Vāl. VII.39. 23-24)

"My forest living monkeys! You are my friends, brothers and another body of mine. You have saved me from many crises. Therefore blessed is the king Sugrīva to have good friends like you." Apart from this Śrī Rāma showed affectionate sentiments towards his friends at so many other occasions. His friends like Sugrīva etc., also praised his friendly sentiment more than once. They were so much overwhelmed that they never remembered their wealth, kith and kin and enjoyment. They were always prepared to sacrifice

even their life for Rāma. Blessed are Rāma and his friends. If the friendship is cultivated, it must be like this.

Affection to those who came to his refuge—

Even though *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is replete with examples of his protection to those who came to his refuge, yet the episode when Vibhīṣaṇa after being insulted by Rāvaṇa came to Rāma, is most inspiring and blissful to the devotees.

When Rāvaṇa refused to accommodate even the just and pious advice of Vibhīṣaṇa, on the contrary he insulted him before his court fully packed then a sorry and disappointed Vibhīṣaṇa came to seek refuge with Rāma. When Sugrīva saw Vibhīṣaṇa coming through the sky, he alerted all the monkeys. In the sky itself, he proclaimed, "I am the younger brother of wicked and sinful Rāvaṇa. My name is Vibhīṣaṇa. Having been insulted by Rāvaṇa I have come in refuge of Śrī Rāma. You please inform about my arrival to Śrī Rāma who's the refuge of all creatures.

Having so heard Sugrīva went to Lord Rāma and informed him about the coming of Vibhīṣaṇa and at the same time he cautioned him against the *Rākṣasa* nature of Vibhīṣaṇa. Besides he advised him to act after fully considering pros and cons and examining him thoroughly. Similarly all other monkeys, sitting there, offered their suggestions. Everybody doubted Vibhīṣaṇa. Only Hanumān most humbly pleaded with several arguments for accepting Vibhīṣaṇa as faultless and a real seeker of refuge. After hearing everybody

Lord Rāma eventually declared—

मित्रभावेन सम्प्राप्तं न त्यजेयं कथञ्चन।
दोषो यद्यपि तस्य स्यात् सतामेतदगर्हितम्॥

(Vāl. VI. 18. 3)

"I cannot desert Vibhīṣaṇa who has come as a friend. Even if there is wickedness in him, his acceptance is not reprehensible in the eyes of good people. Still Sugrīva was not satisfied. He said so many things that could create suspicion and apprehension. Then Śrī Rāma convinced him—

पिशाचान् दानवान् यक्षान् पृथिव्यां चैव राक्षसान्।
अङ्गुल्यग्रेण तान् हन्यामिच्छन् हरिगणेश्वर॥
× × ×
बद्धाञ्जलिपुटं दीनं याचन्तं शरणागतम्।
न हन्यादानृशंस्यार्थमपि शत्रुं परंतप॥
× × ×
सकृदेव प्रपन्नाय तवास्मीति च याचते।
अभयं सर्वभूतेभ्यो ददाम्येतद् व्रतं मम॥
आनयैनं हरिश्रेष्ठ दत्तमस्याभयं मया।
विभीषणो वा सुग्रीव यदि वा रावणः स्वयम्॥

(Vāl. VI.18. 23, 27, 33-34)

"O Lord of monkeys! I can kill all the goblins, *Dānavas, Yakṣas* and *Rākṣasas* of the world with my finger tip if I so desire (thus there is nothing to apprehend). O scorcher of the foes! Even if an enemy comes with his hands folded and begs humbly for protection, he should not be killed just for the sake of mercy. I have taken a vow for removing all fears from all creatures, of he who comes to me and says

even once that he is mine and wants protection for himself. O Sugrīva, the best among monkeys! (As per this policy) I granted him freedom from fear. So bring him in. It matters little if he is Vibhīṣaṇa or Rāvaṇa himself."

It was enough. They were all enchanted to hear what the Lord said and as per the instructions of the Lord brought Vibhīṣaṇa in. Vibhīṣaṇa alongwith his ministers fell prostrate at the feet of the Lord and said—"O Lord, I have abandoned everything and have come to your shelter. Now my sovereignty comfort and life—all is at your command." After this the Lord consoled him by His affectionate look and words. He got the sea-water brought through Lakṣmaṇa and coronated him for the throne of Lanka.

Gratefulness—

Really speaking Lord Rāma was supreme *Brahma* Himself. His prowess was unlimited. He could do anything and did do everything. Who could oblige Him? Yet He always magnified and praised and expressed gratitude even for the simple services rendered by His subordinates just to enhance the feeling of devotion in them.

Below is narration of when Śrī Rāma during his search for Sītā happens to see the pitiable condition of Jaṭāyu fatally wounded and felled by Rāvaṇa—

निकृत्तपक्षं रुधिरावसिक्तं तं गृध्रराजं परिगृह्य राघवः ।
क्व मैथिली प्राणसमा गतेति विमुच्य वाचं निपपात भूमौ ॥

(Vāl. III. 67. 29)

"Whose wings were cut apart and the whole body was smeared with blood—such a Jaṭāyu was embraced by Śrī Rāma. He asked about where his consort, as dear as his life, was gone and then He fell on the ground."

Thereafter while informing about Rāvaṇa and abduction of Sītā Jaṭāyu succumbed to death, Śrī Rāma did his funeral with his own hands. What a sense of gratitude?

There are many other similar references. While talking to monkeys, kings, *Ṛṣis* and gods, He often said that it was through their assistance and grace only that He could get victory over Rāvaṇa.

When Śrī Hanumān met Him after tracing Sītā, Lord Rāma praised his act again and again and went even to the extent to say—"You have saved me, the Raghu dynasty and Lakṣmaṇa, O Hanumān, by finding the trace of Sītā. I fail to see anything that I could give you in exchange of this favour you did. Therefore, I give you my embrace that is my supreme possession." So saying Śrī Rāma, horripilated with joy, embraced Hanumān. After his coronation while seeing Hanumān off, He remembered the services and performances of Hanumān and said—

एकैकस्योपकारस्य प्राणान् दास्यामि ते कपे।
शेषस्येहोपकाराणां भवाम ऋणिनो वयम्॥
मदङ्गे जीर्णतां यातु यत्त्वयोपकृतं कपे।
नरः प्रत्युपकाराणामापत्स्वायाति पात्रताम्॥

(Vāl. VII. 40. 23-24)

"O Monkey! If I give my life in exchange of your single act of benevolence, yet I still will remain indebted for the rest. Let your benevolent acts dissolve into my body itself and I may not find any occasion to repay them as it is only in the crisis that a person requires any return of his services." It shows how ideal was the sense of gratitude in Śrī Rāma.

Affection to subjects—

The quality of pleasing his subjects also in Śrī Rāma was unique. He looked after His subjects with more fatherly affection and care than one's own sons. He remained always devoted to the welfare of his subjects. This was the reason why the inhabitants of Ayodhya had supreme love for Him.

By reading the episodes like departure of Rāma to the forest, meeting the subjects alongwith Bharata in Chitrakoot, final departure to his supreme abode; it appears that right from the beginning up to the very end everybody—young or old, small or big, loved Śrī Rāma extremely. They were always prepared in everyway to sacrifice even their life for Śrī Rāma. The separation of Rāma was unbearable to them.

When Rāma was going to the forest, the major part of the population followed almost mad in his love. Lord Rāma pleaded and requested them a lot to go back but he failed. Eventually he had to leave them while they were in deep slumber and went to the forest. It is said in the description of that time that even beasts and birds were under the spell of his love.

The separation of Śrī Rāma was unbearable to them. The description of his departure to supreme abode is equally unique.

Besides this, he deserted the same Sītā eventhough she was faultless and faithful to him; the same Sītā in whose separation he was wailing like an ordinary person maddened with lust, just for the sake of pleasing his subjects. This also shows how ideal a king he was so far as his sense of appeasing subjects was concerned.

The glory of Śrī Rāma—

Śrī Rāma was the incarnation of the supreme *Brahma paramātmā* Lord Viṣṇu. This has been repeated in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* at different places. When atrocities of Rāvaṇa had reached the limit, then gods and seers became very sad and they requested Lord Brahmā. While Lord Brahmā was consoling gods, Lord Viṣṇu manifested Himself. That description runs like this—

एतस्मिन्नन्तरे विष्णुरुपयातो महाद्युतिः।
शङ्खचक्रगदापाणिः पीतवासा जगत्पतिः॥
वैनतेयं समारुह्य भास्करस्तोयदं यथा।
तप्तहाटककेयूरो वन्द्यमानः सुरोत्तमैः॥

(Vāl. I. 15. 16-17)

"In the mean time the greatly splendrous, being adored by the foremost of gods, the lord of the universe, Lord Viṣṇu appeared mounting on Garuḍa like the effulgent sun riding over the cloud. He had yellow garments, was holding conch, discus, mace

etc.,—his weapons, the shining golden ornaments bedecked his arms."

After hearing the implorings of gods the Lord granted to incarnate in human guise in the house of Daśaratha and then he disappeard. After the marriage when Śrī Rāma was returning to Ayodhya, he met Paraśurāma on his way. In order to verify if Śrī Rāma was the incarnation of Viṣṇu or not, he asked Śrī Rāma to string the bow of Lord Viṣṇu and shoot an arrow. Then Śrī Rāma instantly took that divine bow from his hand and put the arrow on the string and said—"It is divine *Vaiṣṇava* arrow. Where should it be shot at? Paraśurāma was startled to see and hear this. His effulgence merged into that of Śrī Rāma. Paraśurāma said while praising Rāma—

अक्षय्यं मधुहन्तारं जानामि त्वां सुरेश्वरम्।
धनुषोऽस्य परामर्शात् स्वस्ति तेऽस्तु परन्तप॥

(Vāl. I. 76. 17)

"O Rāma, the scorcher of the foes, may God bless you. By stringing the bow I have come to the conclusion that you are the killer of demon Madhu, the Lord of gods and Viṣṇu, the imperishable." Describing this way the prowess of Rāma and circumambulating him, Paraśurāma went away. After Rāvaṇa was killed when the gods headed by Brahmā, came to Śrī Rāma, He said that He regarded Himself to be just a human being and the son of Daśaratha. "Now you may tell who I am and where I came from." Then Lord Brahmā disclosed the entire secrets before all. There

describing the glory of Rāma Lord Brahmā says—

भवान्नारायणो देवः श्रीमांश्चक्रायुधः प्रभुः।
एकशृङ्गो वराहस्त्वं भूतभव्यसपत्नजित्॥
अक्षरं ब्रह्म सत्यं च मध्ये चान्ते च राघव।
लोकानां त्वं परो धर्मो विष्वक्सेनश्चतुर्भुजः॥
शार्ङ्गधन्वा हृषीकेशः पुरुषः पुरुषोत्तमः।
अजितः खड्गधृग् विष्णुः कृष्णश्चैव बृहद्बलः॥

(Vāl. VI. 117. 13—15)

"You are Śrī Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of Lakṣmī, *Prabhu,* holding discus in the hand. You are the vanquisher of past and future foes and Lord Varāha holding one single tusk. You are the imperishable *Brahma,* the very truth, present in the beginning, middle and end, you are four armed Viṣṇu, the greatest *Dharma* of all spheres. You are the unconquered, you are the *Puruṣa* and *Puruṣottama,* you are Hṛṣīkeśa (the Lord of senses) holding *Śārṅga* bow and dagger, you are Viṣṇu and mightiest Kṛṣṇa.

In the similar way he said much more. The king Daśaratha also in the course of conversation with Lakṣmaṇa, says in regard of his glorious services made to Rāma—

एतत्तदुक्तमव्यक्तमक्षरं ब्रह्मसंमितम्।
देवानां हृदयं सौम्य गुह्यं रामः परंतपः॥
अवाप्तधर्माचरणं यशश्च विपुलं त्वया।
एवं शुश्रूषताव्यग्रं वैदेह्या सह सीतया॥

(Vāl. VI. 119. 32-33)

"Rāma is Brahma Himself as described in the *Vedas.* He, the scorcher of the foes, is unmanifest and

imperishable. He is the heart of all gods and supreme secret also. By serving Him alongwith Vaidehī Sītā with utmost care you have earned great fame."

Besides this Lord Brahmā, gods and other *Maharṣis* described the glory of Śrī Rāma more than once on different occasions when He closed the chapter of His humanly sports and went to His supreme abode, in that reference too it has been made clear that Rāma is supreme *Brahma*. Thus there is no room for doubting the Brahmahood of Rāma for a person who has faith in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and its authenticity.

Valour—

Any effort will fall short of in describing His valour, bravery, steadfastness, prowess and His skill in handling arms and weapons. The whole *Rāmāyaṇa* is replete with it. One can see any episode of battle while guarding the sacrifice of Viśvāmitra, He killed Tāḍakā and Subāhu within no time and threw Mārīca through His *Mānavāstra* in the sea one hundred *Yojanas* away.

In Janakapur he easily lifted and broke the bow which the other mighty kings could not even move in spite of their best efforts. By stringing the bow of Viṣṇu He deprived Paraśurāma of his splendour. In Pañcavaṭī He felled 14000 demons within no time and with nobody to help him; killed a great warrior like Bāli with a single shot of arrow. By just taking aim with His bow, he created a great upheaval in the ocean and the frightened ocean appeared and sought for

refuge. Going to Lanka and killing all demons alongwith Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa, He proclaimed victory all over the world.

Forgiveness—

In spite of being so valourous and brave, Śrī Rāma was of such a forgiving nature that He never took any wrong done to Him by anybody, seriously as such. Wherever He showed anger or waged a sportive war, He did it as a course of punishment for the wrong done to His devotees and saintly persons and with this pretext for chastising the wickeds. He never mentioned even the wrong done by a maid like Mantharā.

Conclusion—

It is simply, impossible to describe through pen, the innumerable ideal qualities of Śrī Rāma. Right from Vālmīki, the first poet, to almost all leading poets of modern age have scribed the pastimes of Śrī Rāma and tried to make their speach fruitful but nobody could find the end of limitless merits of Śrī Rāma, whatever little I have written, is based on *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* and that too very briefly. I simply took courage (perhaps unauthorisedly) as I do not know Sanskrit much nor even Hindi. Therefore the learned readers may excuse me for my shortcomings. By reading or hearing this if any god loving person draws benefit to any extent, it will be a great blessing for me and I will be obliged to them.

The Ideal Life of Śrī Sītā

Prologue—

Sītā occupies most exalted position as a chaste lady among all the chaste women of the world. Among all the female characters of *Rāmāyaṇa* the character of Sītā is the best ideal in every respect and imitable, there is no doubt. The living of Sītā is a good guide for all Hindu ladies in all circumstances. The confluence of merits like uncommon chastity, renunciation, high standard of behaviour, fearlessness, calmness, forgiveness, goodheartedness, endurance, piety, modesty, self-restraint, is very difficult to find in any other woman of the world. It is difficult to find an example of sacred life and matchless conjugal fidelity like Sītā in the History of the world. Every habit and activity of Sītā from the beginning to the end is ideal and sacred. There is no incident of her life which is not educative to our mothers, daughters-in-law, sisters and daughters. It will not be an exaggeration to say that Sītā was a crest jewel of all the chaste women the world ever has given birth to.

When Śrī Rāma went to catch the illusory deer and when Mārica spoke "O! Sītā, O! Lakṣmaṇa" in the voice of Śrī Rāma and Sītā heard those pathetic words she used very harsh words for Lakṣmaṇa disturbed as she was. Those words also were full of ideal conjugal affection but in the view of Lakṣmaṇa's motherly affection for Sītā, that attitude of hers

towards Lakṣmaṇa seems to be improper. This is why Sītā herself repented afterwards Our ladies should take lesson from this incident that if a wife feels that her husband is in peril she must try to help him till the last breath of her life but it is wrong to use unbecoming words or pass sarcastic remarks against a faithful attendant or kinsman.

It can be inferred from preceding and following narrations that in her parental home also Sītā behaved with all very affectionately and everyone—big or small loved her. But *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is mum in regard of her child life. It appears from what she said while going to the forest that her parents taught her all useful lessons while she was young, she had a practice of good conduct and self control and acquired the capability of taking pleasure and pain alike and be happy in all circumstances whatsoever. This I say from the view-point of her humanly sports. Otherwise she was the supreme mother of the whole creation.

Loveful insisting for service—

While preparing for the forest when Śrī Rāma went to the gyaeneceum and all of a sudden divulged this information about his exilement to her, Sītā at once made up her mind what course of duty she would adopt. She says—

न पिता नात्मजो वात्मा न माता न सखीजनः।
इह प्रेत्य च नारीणां पतिरेको गतिः सदा॥
यदि त्वं प्रस्थितो दुर्गं वनमद्यैव राघव।
अग्रतस्ते गमिष्यामि मृद्नन्ती कुशकण्टकान्॥

× × ×

प्रासादाग्रे विमानैर्वा वैहायसगतेन वा।
सर्वावस्थागता भर्तुः पादच्छाया विशिष्यते॥

× × ×

सुखं वने निवत्स्यामि यथैव भवने पितुः।
अचिन्तयन्ती त्रींल्लोकांश्चिन्तयन्ती पतिव्रतम्॥
शुश्रूषमाणा ते नित्यं नियता ब्रह्मचारिणी।
सह रंस्ये त्वया वीर वनेषु मधुगन्धिषु॥

× × ×

अनन्यभावामनुरक्तचेत सं
त्वया वियुक्तां मरणाय निश्चिताम्।
नयस्व मां साधु कुरुष्व याचनां
नातो मया ते गुरुता भविष्यति॥

(Vāl. II. 27. 6-7, 9, 12-13, 23)

"For a woman in this world and the otherworld also, it is only husband who provides shelter. Father, mother, son, friends or even one's own body—none of them may provide a real help. If you are to go to the forest today itself, I will walk ahead of you trampling down blades of grass *Kuśa* and thorns ..... It is more precious for a woman to live under the shadow of her husband's feet than to live in the lofty palace, to ride in aircraft or to walk in the sky (through occult power as *Aṇimā* etc.....). Therefore, I will live in the forest comfortably as I lived in my father's palace. I will not be thinking of anything in all the three worlds. I will think of *Pativrata Dharma* and will engage myself in serving you. Living a regulated life I will follow the rules of *Brahmacarya* and move around the jungles full of sweet fragrance. My whole hearted love is dedicated for you. My mind does not

think of anything other than you. I will certainly die if I am separated from you. Therefore, accede to my request and take me alongwith you. You will feel no extra burden because of me.

She expressed similar ideas full of *Dharma* and love at that time. Sītā was not shaken even in the least when Śrī Rāma presented a grave picture of inconveniences of the forest life. How insignificant she regarded the mundane pleasure in comparison of nursing her husband; what a deep love, she had for her husband and how she wished with all her heart and soul to nurse him—these things one can appreciate only by going through the narration concerned. Sītā tried her best and was adament too to get permission from the Lord to accompany him to the forest. She applied every measure like *Sāma* (convincing) *Dāna* and ethical arguments.

At last her loveful sentiment prevailed and Rāma agreed to take her with Him. This proves that the wife has a right to compel her husband to reconsider his decision indeed for the sake of serving him and not for her own sake. She can so insist for convenience of the husband of course. Everybody praises this act of loveful insisting by Sītā, Nobody criticises it. Because Sītā went to the forest abandoning all worldly pleasures only for the comfort of her husband and serving him and not for her sensual pleasure. This is why, in view of the conjugal piety this act of Sītā is regarded as ideal. The menfolk also should take lesson from this that they should not leave their wives alone unless so agreed and go any where

else. If the husband does not want to keep her with him lest she may be inconvenienced, still the wife must accompany him atleast in time of crisis inorder to provide him comfort and serve him. Of course there can be no hard and fast rule for ever and always. Therefore one should act as the time and situation may permit.

Tolerance and endurance—

Sītā not only endured gladly many inconveniences in her forest life but there is still another instance of her tolerance. When she was to go to the forest and Kaikeyī gave her garment fit for forest living that time not only all the ladies of royal gyacneceum and Daśaratha himself were in distress beyond description but an ascetic like Vasiṣṭha also got mentally agitated and he scolded Kaikeyī in very strong words and stopped Sītā from wearing it. But in the mind of Sītā there appeared no ill feeling even at such a time. She simply and silently heard what Vasiṣṭha said to Kaikeyī. Not only this but as per instruction of the mother-in-law she put that dress on her person and in spite of the orders of Vasiṣṭha did not change her mind. The poet has said in this regard—

तस्मिंस्तथा जल्पति विप्रमुख्ये
गुरौ नृपस्याप्रतिमप्रभावे।
नैव स्म सीता विनिवृत्तभावा
प्रियस्य भर्तुः प्रतिकारकामा॥

(Vāl. II. 37. 37)

"In spite of the fact that the royal priest and the crest jewel among the *Ṛṣis*, Vasiṣṭha who was incomparably influencial, went on saying like this, Sītā

with her desire to follow her husband did not change her decision."

This episode also teaches a lesson that if the mother-in-law or any other lady equal in rank utters some harsh words and behaves inagreeably, one should tolerate it gladly and if she happens to accompany her husband in a time of crisis then she must live simply and must not covet for decoration.

Nursing, husband in the forest—

Sītā who was always happy in serving her husband when went to the forest, she abandoned all material comforts. She never remembered that she ever had kingdom, palace garden, wealth and servants. She got herself always busy in the service of Lord Rāma and with his permission entertained forest dwelling ascetics by offering ablutions etc. She remained fearless in the forest as if she was in her home. She always thought of Śrī Rāma and she lived with him happily in the forest. On the way from Chitrakoot to Panchavati when Śrī Rāma stopped at the hermitage of Atri, at that time Anasūyā taught her the *Dharma* of a chaste lady most beautifully. Having that heard Sītā said while supporting her teachings—

यद्यप्येष भवेद्भर्ता अनार्यो वृत्तिवर्जितः।
अद्वैधमत्र वर्तव्यं तथाप्येष मया भवेत्॥
किं पुनर्यो गुणश्लाघ्यः सानुक्रोशो जितेन्द्रियः।
स्थिरानुरागो धर्मात्मा मातृवत्पितृवत्प्रियः॥

(Vāl. II. 118. 3-4)

"Had my husband been ignoble of character (अनार्य) and without means of livelihood, still I would be serving him without any hesitation. But he is an

object of praise to all and sundry on account of his merits and is kind, self controlled, pious, permanently loveful and well-wishing like mother and father, in that case he deserves all service undisputably."

In the same connection while praising the prowess and merits of Śrī Rāma, Sītā said—"When I was to come to the forest, the advice given by my mother-in-law, Kausalyā in regard of my duty, is imprinted on my heart and is still fresh. Prior to that at the time of marriage near fire what my mother taught me, that too I still remember. I know that the husband alone is *Guru* and what not for a wife. There is no other penance for her greater than nursing her husband" and so on.

This shows how lofty ideas she had about serving the husband and how she admired the advice of her parents and parent-in-law.

Fearlessness—

You may have here a sample of Sītā's dazling splendour and fearlessness. What a frank and fearless reply She makes to the matchlessly valorous Rāvaṇa who was a source of terror even to gods. Even though captivated by Rāvaṇa, she disdained him scornfully and said in anger—

त्वं पुनर्जम्बुकः सिंहीं मामिहेच्छसि दुर्लभाम्।
नाहं शक्या त्वया स्प्रष्टुमादित्यस्य प्रभा यथा॥

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सूर्याचन्द्रमसौ चोभौ पाणिभ्यां हर्तुमिच्छसि॥
यो रामस्य प्रियां भार्यां प्रधर्षयितुमिच्छसि।
अग्निं प्रज्वलितं दृष्ट्वा वस्त्रेणाहर्तुमिच्छसि॥

अयोमुखानां शूलानामग्रे चरितुमिच्छसि।
रामस्य सदृशीं भार्यां योऽधिगन्तुं त्वमिच्छसि॥

(Vāl. III. 47. 37, 42—44)

"You are a jackal and I am a lioness. I am impossible for you to attain. Still do you aspire to get me? Just as nobody can touch the dazzles of sun even so you cannot touch me. How do you dare to have Rāma's beloved wife? Certainly you want to catch hold of sun and moon with your hands. You decidedly aspire to collect the inflamed fire in a cloth piece or else you wish to walk over the tips of sharp iron rods."

Apart from this she also said—"The disparity between Śrī Rāma and you is exactly like between a lion and jackal; an ocean and a brook; nectar and *Kāñjī* (a fermented substance); gold and iron; sandal-paste and mud; elephant and cat; Garuḍa and a crow and so on."

From this the lesson may be drawn that a woman completely depending on her chastity and God almighty should not get frightened in any situation. She should fight against injustice quite boldly. God will surely help if one truly depends upon Him.

Firmness in the observance of chastity—

One should not abandon one's chastity under the pressure of some enticement or fear or even in a crisis of grave nature—this lesson also we may draw from Sītā's life. The wicked Rāvaṇa spared no effort to spoil her *Dharma* in the *Aśokavana* of Lanka. He himself went to *Aśokavana* along with his wives, tried to entice her by making a pompous show of his wealth, made appeal several times. Even then Sītā

remained firm (like a rock) in her *Dharma* and reproached the wicked Rāvaṇa by moral arguments. When Rāvaṇa went on using harsh words against Rāma, tried to frighten Sītā, he even put before her the conjured head of Śrī Rāma, then the miserable Sītā decided to put an end to her life yet she did not even dream to abandon *Dharma.* Her mind always encircled the feet of Śrī Rāma. The *Rākṣasa* ladies also teased her very much by showing lucrative offers and even frightening. But Sītā was after all Sītā. She did not play any trick and did not allow even her external behaviour to contain any fault in order to escape perilous situation and what to talk of deserting *Dharma?* There never appeared a wavelet of evil thought in her taintless and pious mind. This episode in *Sundara Kāṇḍa* is worth studying carefully. It presents a most touching narration of how Sītā passed her life in *Aśoka Vana.* The lamenting Sītā says—

नहि मे जीवितेनार्थो नैवार्थैर्न च भूषणैः।
वसन्त्या राक्षसीमध्ये विना रामं महारथम्॥

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धिङ्मामनार्यामसतीं याहं तेन विना कृता।
मुहूर्तमपि जीवामि जीवितं पापजीविका॥
चरणेनापि सव्येन न स्पृशेयं निशाचरम्।
रावणं किं पुनरहं कामयेयं विगर्हितम्॥

(Vāl. V. 26. 5, 7-8)

"What use do I have with my life, wealth and ornaments while living among the demonesses without the great charioteer Rāma? I am most ignoble and unchaste. Fie on me that being away from him I am holding my sinful life even for a moment. I cannot

touch this *Rākṣasa* Rāvaṇa even with my left foot. There is nothing to talk of loving him."

The chaste ladies should draw lesson from this that even though in great peril they should think of only their husband if they are separated from them. There should be complete reliance on God and *Dharma* and they should have courage, bravery and steadfastness in their mind. They should always be ready to sacrifice even their life for the sake of observing *Dharma.*

Alertness—

The quality of carefulness also in Sītā is imitable. When Hanumān went to *Aśokavana,* then Sītā very cleverly tested and examined him. Till she became sure that Hanumān really was the messenger of Rāma and came to find her trace, she did not talk to him freely and with confidence. After a great deal of conversation took place, the poet says—

एवं विश्वासिता सीता हेतुभिः शोककर्शिता।
उपपन्नैरभिज्ञानैर्दूतं तमधिगच्छति॥

(Vāl. V. 35.85)

"Reassured thus by cogent reasons and by describing the bodily marks of Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, Hanumān proved his credence to Sītā who was emaciated with grief. Then only she took him to be the envoy of Rāma."

After this when Hanumān presented the signet ring of Rāma with 'Rāma' engraved on it which strengthened her confidence then Sītā permitted him to talk with her—

अर्हसे च कपिश्रेष्ठ मया समभिभाषितुम्।
यद्यसि प्रेषितस्तेन रामेण विदितात्मना॥

(Vāl. V. 36.10)

"Hanumān! If you are sent by the self-realized Rāma, you can talk to me."

Love—

Sītā had an unearthly love for Rāma, she had unbounded joy when she had the message of Śrī Rāma through Hanumān. In the very beginning of conversation she asked about the well being of her lord and his young brother. She herself described his merits again and again. In course of conversation she was overwhelmed with love and started weeping.

When Hanumān was invisible for her eyes and was describing the sports of Rāma she had many different thoughts in her mind and described her condition in this way—

रामेति रामेति सदैव बुद्ध्या विचिन्त्य वाचा ब्रुवती तमेव।
तस्यानुरूपं च कथां तदर्थामेवं प्रपश्यामि तथा शृणोमि॥
अहं हि तस्याद्य मनोभवेन संपीडिता तद्गतसर्वभावा।
विचिन्तयन्ती सततं तमेव तथैव पश्यामि तथा शृणोमि॥

(Vāl. V. 32. 11-12)

"I always contemplate Śrī Rāma in my mind, describe him with my speech. I hear about him accordingly and am witnessing the same type of incidents happening. All my sentiments are dedicated to him. I always have a desire for him and think of him alone. Therefore I always see and hear only such things."

How deeply she loved Rāma and how she was craving to meet him, is shown from her various utterances right from her abduction by Rāvaṇa till the

victory over Lanka. While going through those narrations even a hard-hearted person starts weeping what to talk of a sentimental one? Lord Rāma has praised Sītā's love more than once. He himself like an ordinary lustful man wailing and crying for Sītā, has attested Sītā's love. In the separation of Sītā a lamenting Rāma asked the young *Ṛṣis*, the sun, the wind, the beasts and birds and even the trees and creepers the whereabouts of Sītā.

From this it should not be taken that Lord Rāma was a libidinous person. It was for the reason that Sītā had a very deep love and she was disturbed on his account. For this only the all-time desireless Rāma had to act like this. It is a vow indeed, of the Lord—

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।

(Gītā IV.11)

This is why like an extremely libidinous person suffering the pang of separation he justified the above mentioned principle. We should take lesson from this that if we have a real craze for God, He will have to feel the same craze to meet us. So we should make all efforts to strengthen this craze.

Avoiding other men—

While conversing with Hanumān when Sītā remembered the merits, valour and glory of Rāma and was choked with pathos and tears rolled down on her cheeks then Hanumān consoled her and said—

श्रुत्वैव च वचो मह्यं क्षिप्रमेष्यति राघवः।
चमूं प्रकर्षन्महतीं हर्यृक्षगणसंकुलाम्॥
अथवा मोचयिष्यामि त्वामद्यैव सराक्षसात्।
अस्माद् दुःखादुपारोह मम पृष्ठमनिन्दिते॥

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द्रक्ष्यस्यद्यैव वैदेहि राघवं सहलक्ष्मणम्।
व्यवसायसमायुक्तं विष्णुं दैत्यवधे तथा॥

(Vāl. V. 37. 20-21, 24)

"As soon as Śrī Rāma hears from me, he will at once start with the huge army of monkeys and bears for Lanka. Or else O irreproachable lady! you may sit on my back and I will today itself free you from this misery and *Rākṣasas* as well..... By so doing you will see today itself Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa who are preparing for the destruction of the *Rākṣasas* just as Lord Viṣṇu did for the sake of killing *Daityas.*"

Hanumān also said to Sītā—"I have enough strength to carry entire Lanka with Rāvaṇa himself. When I will be taking you from here, all the inhabitants of Lanka will not be able to follow me. Very soon I will conduct you to Śrī Rāma."

Having so heard from Hanumān Sītā was pleased very much within her and said—

भर्तुर्भक्तिं पुरस्कृत्य रामादन्यस्य वानर।
नाहं स्प्रष्टुं स्वतो गात्रमिच्छेयं वानरोत्तम॥
यदहं गात्रसंस्पर्शं रावणस्य गता बलात्।
अनीशा किं करिष्यामि विनाथा विवशा सती॥
यदि रामो दशग्रीवमिह हत्वा सराक्षसम्।
मामितो गृह्य गच्छेत तत्तस्य सदृशं भवेत्॥

(Vāl. V. 37. 62—64)

"O! Best among the monkeys, with due consideration to the conjugal fidelity I do not want to touch willingly any person other than Lord Rāma. It was simply by force that Rāvaṇa touched my body. At that time I was helpless and unable to do anything,

what could I do? Now if Śrī Rāma kills Rāvaṇa alongwith *Rākṣasas* and take me from here; this will be a valorous act and befitting to him."

Think it over. Sītā even though in great peril, did not think it proper to touch a devotee of high order like Hanumān whose very object of life was to serve Śrī Rāma and Sītā and who had motherly sentiment for her although she was extremely eager to meet her lord and go to Him and (Hanumān's offer) was a golden chance for her. What a firm faith in *Dharma*. The lesson that can be drawn from this is that even in peril, as far as possible a lady should not touch any other person.

Forgiveness—

After Rāvaṇa was killed and Śrī Rāma attained victory Hanumān went to Sītā to inform her and when he delivered the message of Śrī Rāma to her he said this much also—"I wish to kill all those wicked demonesses who formarly threatened, frightened and tortured you. Please permit me". At that time if Sītā wished, she would have signalled Hanumān and take revenge upon them but Sītā was the copartner of most merciful Rāma. How could she do such a thing? The ascetic Sītā who had soft corner for poor said—

विधेयानां च दासीनां कः कुप्येद् वानरोत्तम।
भाग्यवैषम्यदोषेण पुरस्ताद् दुष्कृतेन च॥
मयैतत्प्राप्यते सर्वं स्वकृतं ह्युपभुज्यते।
मैवं वद महाबाहो दैवी ह्येषा परा गतिः॥

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पापानां वा शुभानां वा वधार्हाणामथापि वा।
कार्यं कारुण्यमार्येण न कश्चिन्नापराध्यति॥

(Vāl. VI.113.39-40, 45)

"O! Best among the monkeys, who will be such a fool to show anger on the maids who simply implement the orders of others? Because a person experiences the result of his own action. Due to my ill luck and my past deeds I had to undergo this suffering. It is all the play of the fate. Nobody should be blamed for this. Therefore do not think of killing the demonesses. A saintly person should show only mercy on all even though the object may be a sinner, a pious or even one who has committed a crime worth of killing as everybody is prone to fault and so on."

Fire ordeal—

When Hanumān coming back from *Aśokavana* came to Śrī Rāma and said that Sītā was extremely eager to see him then as per the orders of Śrī Rāma, Vibhīṣaṇa having Sītā bathed and bedecked with clothings and ornaments brought her to him. After a very long time all the sorrow of Sītā was gone. When she saw the face of Śrī Rāma beautiful like full moon, her face brightened like a taintless moon. But at that very time among many other things Śrī Rāma said—

यत्कर्तव्यं मनुष्येण धर्षणां प्रतिमार्जता।
तत्कृतं रावणं हत्वा मयेदं मानकाङ्क्षिणा॥

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कः पुमांस्तु कुले जातः स्त्रियं परगृहोषिताम्।
तेजस्वी पुनरादद्यात् सुहृल्लोभेन चेतसा॥

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यदर्थं निर्जिता मे त्वं सोऽयमासादितो मया।
नास्ति मे त्वय्यभिष्वङ्गो यथेष्टं गम्यतामिति॥

(Vāl. VI. 115.13,19,21)

"I did my job by killing Rāvaṇa to preserve my prestige which is the duty of a person to wash away the insult meted out to him. My aim for which I have got you released from the claws of Rāvaṇa has been fulfilled. Now I have no affinity for you as no high-bred and splendrous person can accept a woman for the sake of conjugal affection who has been living in the house of somebody else. Thus you can go anywhere you please."

After hearing these dreadfully harsh words of Rāma what affliction Sītā underwent, cannot be described. The verbal arrows of her lord made a serious wound in her heart. She wept bitterly and said in a choked voice and heart rending words—"My Lord, why are you telling such harsh and unbecoming words like an ordinary person? I swear by my character. Have faith in me. Of course Rāvaṇa touched my body while abducting me but at that time I was helpless. I cannot be blamed for this. Within my control I have my heart which has not been occupied by anybody else even in a dream. Yet if you had to do this, you should have abandoned me at that very time you sent Hanumān so that I should have given up my life by now."

In this way Sītā said many more things but Śrī Rāma made no reply to what she said. Then she in a pitiful manner addressed Lakṣmaṇa who was absorbed in some thought and said bitterly weeping—"Lakṣmaṇa! After being a victim to this false ignominy I do not want to live any more. In order to remove my sorrow you do prepare a pyre here itself. My dear

husband, unsatisfied with my virtues, has deserted me before this assembly. Now I will enter the fire to put an end to this life. Having heard what Sītā said, Lakṣmaṇa first became somewhat sad, but afterwards realizing that it was intention of Rāma also, he at once made the pyre. Sītā at first made the circumambulation of Śrī Rāma and then bade her *Praṇāma* to gods and Brahmins. Then she went near the flaming fire and said with folded hands—

यथा मे हृदयं नित्यं नापसर्पति राघवात्।
तथा लोकस्य साक्षी मां सर्वतः पातु पावकः॥
यथा मां शुद्धचारित्रां दुष्टां जानाति राघवः।
तथा लोकस्य साक्षी मां सर्वतः पातु पावकः॥

(Vāl. VI.116.25-26)

"O! Fire-god, the witness of the universe If my mind has never been deviated from Śrī Rāma then you may protect me in everyway. If I am really pious and pure and Śrī Rāma is taking me as a fallen woman due to misunderstanding you may protect me in everyway."

Having so said and circumambulating the fire-god, Sītā fearlessly entered the flaming fire. There was great turmoil everywhere. The gods such as Brahmā. Śiva, Kubera, Indra, Yama and Varuṇa etc., appeared there. Brahmā disclosed there many secrets regarding Śrī Rāma and Sītā.

In the mean time the fire-god appeared in his godly form with Sītā in his lap, handed her over to Śrī Rāma and said—

.....एषा ते राम वैदेही पापमस्यां न विद्यते॥

नैव वाचा न मनसा नैव बुद्ध्या न चक्षुषा।
सुवृत्ता वृत्तशौटीर्यं न त्वामत्यचरच्छुभा॥
रावणेनापनीतैषा वीर्योत्सिक्तेन रक्षसा।
त्वया विरहिता दीना विवशा निर्जने सती॥
रुद्धा चान्तःपुरे गुप्ता त्वच्चित्ता त्वत्परायणा।
रक्षिता राक्षसीभिश्च घोराभिर्घोरबुद्धिभिः॥
प्रलोभ्यमाना विविधं तर्ज्यमाना च मैथिली।
नाचिन्तयत तद्रक्षस्त्वद्गतेनान्तरात्मना॥
विशुद्धभावां निष्पापां प्रतिगृह्णीष्व मैथिलीम्।
न किंचिदभिधातव्या अहमाज्ञापयामि ते॥

(Vāl. VI.118.5—10)

"Rāma, it is your Sītā. She is absolutely sinless. This chaste lady has never done anything against you through her mind, intellect, speech or eyes. The demon Rāvaṇa was intoxicated in his physical might. He abducted the poor fellow forcibly from the lonely *Āśrama* in your absence. He kept her in his inner apartment as a captive and appointed many cruel demonesses to guard her. Still she was mentally with you alone and she thought of only you. She was given lucrative offers; was threatened in many ways but she, mentally engrossed as she was in you never even thought of him. Her thoughts are pure and she is faultless. So own her. Hereafter do not say anything in this regard—these are my orders."

The *Maryādā Puruṣottama* was happy to hear these words of fire-god. His eyes were filled with tears of joy and He said—

अवश्यं चापि लोकेषु सीता पावनमर्हति।
दीर्घकालोषिता ह्यियं रावणान्तःपुरे शुभा॥
बालिशो बत कामात्मा रामो दशरथात्मजः।
इति वक्ष्यति मां लोको जानकीमविशोध्य हि॥

अनन्यहृदयां सीतां मच्चित्तपरिरक्षिणीम्।
अहमप्यवगच्छामि मैथिलीं जनकात्मजाम्॥
इमामपि विशालाक्षीं रक्षितां स्वेन तेजसा।
रावणो नातिवर्तेत वेलामिव महोदधिः॥
न हि शक्तः सुदुष्टात्मा मनसापि हि मैथिलीम्।
प्रधर्षयितुमप्राप्यां दीप्तामग्निशिखामिव॥
नेयमर्हति वैक्लव्यं रावणान्तःपुरे सती।
अनन्या हि मया सीता भास्करस्य प्रभा यथा॥
विशुद्धा त्रिषु लोकेषु मैथिली जनकात्मजा।
न विहातुं मया शक्या कीर्तिरात्मवता यथा॥
अवश्यं च मया कार्यं सर्वेषां वो वचो हितम्।
स्निग्धानां लोकनाथानामेवं च वदतां हितम्॥

(Vāl. VI.118.13—16, 18—21)

"In the eyes of the people it was necessary to test Sītā as she lived in the inner residence of Rāvaṇa for a long period. Had I not tested her people would have said that Rāma, the son of Daśaratha is a fool and libidinous. Jānakī's mind is always engrossed in me and there is no room for anybody else and she always does what I think—I also know this much. She is guarded by her own splendour. Therefore just as an ocean does not cross its limit even so Rāvaṇa could have done no wrong to her. Just as nobody can touch the burning flame of the fire similarly the wicked Rāvaṇa could not think of having her in his possession. She was absolutely unattainable to him. She could not be molested even while in the house of Rāvaṇa. Just as the sun light is identical with the sun even so Sītā is not different from me. Sītā the beloved daughter of Janaka, is most pious in all the three worlds. Therfore just as a man of prestige cannot give up his

fame similarly I will not adandon her. All of you *Lokapālas* are my friends and well wishers and you are speaking about my well-being. Therefore I must agree to what you say for my good."

So saying he accepted the chaste Sītā most happily. One should learn from this episode that a wife should in no condition get angry with her husband. On the contrary she should try every just effort to satisfy him.

Household duty—

When Sītā comes from Lanka to Ayodhya, the first thing she does, is to bid *Praṇāma* at the feet of elderly ladies and her mothers-in-law; worships the gods and nurses equally all her mothers-in-law. In this way attending to all domestic chores beautifully, pleases everybody. She treated her brothers-in-law Bharata, Śatrughna, like her own sons and in feeding them she did not show any different standard. It teaches a lesson that whenever a woman comes from abroad, she muct salute the elderly ladies; should equally serve everybody; should properly attend to domestic duty and should treat the brothers-in-law etc., piously and equally as they do deserve.

Abandonment of Sītā—

The context of Sītā's abandonment is most horripilating. It should be gone through in *Uttara Kāṇḍa* very carefully. Sītā is extremely pure in every respect—this fact was fully known to Śrī Rāma. In Lanka she went through the fire test before all persons and she was proved to be pure. Yet having the public

censure in view and to satisfy his subjects He abandoned Sītā eventhough she was faultless. None of his brothers Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna liked it but there was no way out with them.

Although unwilling yet obeying the orders of the elder brother, Lakṣmaṇa had to go to leave Sītā in the forest. In the forest when Lakṣmaṇa disclosed the fact and Sītā came to know that even being faultless she has been deserted, there was no end to her sorrow. Even at such a time of crisis she did not at all blame her husband. On the contrary sending a message through Lakṣmaṇa She said—

श्वश्रूणामविशेषेण प्राञ्जलिप्रग्रहेण च।
शिरसा वन्द्य चरणौ कुशलं ब्रूहि पार्थिवम्॥
शिरसाभिनतो ब्रूयाः सर्वासामेव लक्ष्मण।
वक्तव्यश्चापि नृपतिर्धर्मेषु सुसमाहितः॥
जानासि च यथा शुद्धा सीता तत्त्वेन राघव।
भक्त्या च परया युक्ता हिता च तव नित्यशः॥
अहं त्यक्ता च ते वीर अयशोभीरुणा जने।
यच्च ते वचनीयं स्यादपवादः समुत्थितः॥
मया च परिहर्तव्यं त्वं हि मे परमा गतिः।
वक्तव्यश्चैव नृपतिर्धर्मेण सुसमाहितः॥
यथा भ्रातृषु वर्तेथास्तथा पौरेषु नित्यदा।
परमो ह्येष धर्मस्ते तस्मात्कीर्तिरनुत्तमा॥
यत्तु पौरजने राजन् धर्मेण समवाप्नुयात्।
अहं तु नानुशोचामि स्वशरीरं नरर्षभ॥
यथापवादः पौराणां तथैव रघुनन्दन।
पतिर्हि देवता नार्याः पतिर्बन्धुः पतिर्गुरुः॥

(Vāl. VII.48.10—17)

Please convey my *Praṇāma* to all the mother's

in-law equally and tell my well-being putting head at the king's feet on my behalf similarly convey my well-being with the head bent, to all others. Then request the king who is cautious in following his *Dharma*—"Oh Lord of Raghus! Sītā is in fact pure and always devoted to you doing always good to you—this thing you already know. Afraid of your ignominy you abandoned me. I also have a duty to rectify and remove the cause of your a censure as you are the ultimate refuge to me. Then you again tell the king to provide a brotherly treatment to all citizens. Getting perturbed with this blasphemy you may not misbehave them in anyway. It is your highest duty to behave with the citizens according to *Dharma* and it will provide you a good name. Oh best among men! I do not worry for my body. I do not mind what and how the inhabitants of the city calumniate me. Let the blasphemy regarding me remain as it is. For a wife only husband is god. He is the only friend and he is *Guru* also."

How touching her words are? Blessed is Sītā and blessed is her love for *Dharma*. Blessed is the *Satī Dharma* of India and blessed is the sacrifice of Indian ladies.

After the conversation with Sītā Lakṣmaṇa saluted her and came back with tearful eyes. This way oppressed with sorrow Sītā wept in the forest. Having heard her cries the *Ṛṣi* Vālmīki took her to his hermitage. There Sītā lived alongwith the ascetic women.

There are so many things to learn from this. The

above discourse of Sītā is worth of daily reciting. The chaste women may ponder over what Sītā said and live their life accordingly.

Entry into Pātāla—

The woman who follows her *Dharma* with heart and soul, its resulting end is always good. While Śrī Rāma was performing *Aśvamedha,* Kuśa and Lava recited Rāmāyaṇa. While listening to it Śrī Rāma came to learn that Kuśa and Lava were the sons of Sītā, then Sītā was called for there by his orders. The chaste Sītā engrossed in the thoughts of Rāma, following the footprints of Vālmīki with her hands folded and eyes filled with tears, came there. At that time what Vālmīki said before the court, washed away all blasphemy and the court reverberated with the hailing sound of Rāma and Sītā. Vālmīki in the course of his testimony in regard of Sītā being sinless, went even to the extent to say—

बहुवर्षसहस्राणि तपश्चर्या मया कृता।
नोपाश्नीयां फलं तस्या दुष्टेयं यदि मैथिली॥

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इयं शुद्धसमाचारा अपापा पतिदेवता।
लोकापवादभीतस्य प्रत्ययं तव दास्यति॥

(Vāl. VII. 96. 20,23)

"For thousands of years I have practised penances. I swear by that to forfeit all its fruits if Sītā is sinful. Sītā regards her husband to be the only god; sinless and pious; her conduct is spotless. You are afraid of public censure. So she will prove her credibility."

Having heard the swearing of Vālmīki and finding Sītā present in the court, Śrī Rāma got choked with

emotions and said—"O sire, I am fully convinced by your words guileless as they were. In Lanka also she proved her credence before all gods by going through fire ordeal. I personally know that Sītā is extremely pure and Kuśa and Lava are my sons. But after this case of public censure I was compelled to abandon Sītā in order to satisfy the subjects. Please, excuse me for that."

In the mean time many gods like Brahmā etc., arrived in the court. Then Rāma said—"I am convinced that Jānakī is pure but I will be happy only when her chastity is established before the world."

At that time Sītā in her saffron garment, her head bent looking towards ground, said—

यथाहं राघवादन्यं मनसापि न चिन्तये।
तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमर्हति॥
मनसा कर्मणा वाचा यथा रामं समर्चये।
तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमर्हति॥
यथैतत्सत्यमुक्तं मे वेद्मि रामात्परं न च।
तथा मे माधवी देवी विवरं दातुमर्हति॥

(Vāl. VII. 97. 14—16)

"If I have never had a thought of anybody other than Rāma in my mind, mother earth may provide space to me. If I have always adored Śrī Rāma with my mind, speech and deed, let mother earth give me a passage. If it is true that I regard nothing as superior to Rāma let mother earth provide me place in her."

As soon as Sītā swore like this, there appeared a rift in the earth and from it sprang out a throne lovely and divine. It was held by divinely looking serpents who were fully bedecked with beautiful

clothes and ornaments. There was Pṛthvī Devī sitting on it. Mother earth embraced Sītā in her arms and received her in her lap. And the throne sank down into *Pātāla* before the eyes of all and sundry. There was a shower of flowers from the sky and sky echoed with the hailing sound of Sītā.

Conclusion—

Sītā passing through the hard tests in her life, proved before all women that the lady who will adhere to *Dharma* even in a crisis period, will always be happy and her fame will remain immortal in the world. Sītā's devotion to her husband, servitude to her mothers-in-law, her efforts to give proper respect to everyone, her affectionate treatment to all, service to the *Ṛṣis*, giving birth to brave sons like Kuśa and Lava, the skill to train them, courage, steadfastness, penance, bravery, righteousness, fearlessness—all these qualities of Sītā are worth imitating. Any woman in the world who follows the footsteps of Sītā without carelessness, infatuation or attachment, will not only do good to herself but also liberate her husband, son and other family members. Such a one crest jewel among chaste ladies is worth adoring and worth seeing and she sanctifies the world with her actions.

Although Sītājī is in person the Bhagavatī yet what she did in her human frame—all of them can be imitated by all women if they have will. Her actions, not being unearthly, are so practicable that all women can get benefited by practising them.

Lakṣmaṇa—the Attendant of Rāma

The glory of Śrī Lakṣmaṇa is unbounded. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Śrī Lakṣmaṇa also is said to be a fractional incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu but in other books he is said to be the incarnation of Ananta (Śeṣanāga). It is clear from his life that his incarnation was for the purpose of serving Śrī Rāma while living under him. This is why in spite of all brothers loving Śrī Rāma equally, in temples the statue of Lakṣmaṇa only is installed alongwith that of Śrī Rāma and only his name is remembered with the name of Rāma. Bharata and Śatrughna did live in their maternal uncle's house apart from Rāma, of their own will but Lakṣmaṇa never left the company of Rāma throughout his life. When abandoned by Rāma, he immediately went to his ultimate abode. Śrī Lakṣmaṇa was a follower of *Brahmacarya,* steadfast, brave, splendrous, valorous and master of his senses. He was very handsome. simple, of enduring nature, fearless, guileless, renouncing, industrious, austere, serviceable, truthful, wise and a moralist. He had supreme love for Śrī Rāma. He took as his only duty to remain always with Śrī Rāma and serve him. He forgot his own self while rendering service to Śrī Rāma. Just as Bharata's sweet, modest and serene love is marvellous, even so the brave and servicing love of Lakṣmaṇa is supremely ideal.

In his childhood also Lakṣmaṇa always followed

Śrī Rāma. It is mentioned in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*—

बाल्यात् प्रभृति सुस्निग्धो लक्ष्मणो लक्ष्मिवर्धनः॥
रामस्य लोकरामस्य भ्रातुर्ज्येष्ठस्य नित्यशः।
सर्वप्रियकरस्तस्य रामस्यापि शरीरतः॥
लक्ष्मणो लक्ष्मिसम्पन्नो बहिःप्राण इवापरः।
न च तेन विना निद्रां लभते पुरुषोत्तमः॥

(Vāl.I.18.28—30)

"Lakṣmaṇa, the beauty enhancing one, right from his childhood, had a natural and deep love for Śrī Rāma, the most beautious in the whole world. He rendered all service to and did every job for Śrī Rāma personally. The beautious Lakṣmaṇa was as if another life to Śrī Rāma because *Puruṣottama* Rāma could not get sleep ever without Lakṣmaṇa.

Śrī Lakṣmaṇa, in his very young age accompanied Śrī Rāma to guard the sacrifice of Viśvāmitra. There he always engaged himself in the service of Śrī Rāma. There he slept on leaf bed and living with Rāma, protected the *Yajña* of *Muni* as ordered by Rāma by killing demons.

Having done the job of guarding Viśvāmitra's *Yajña,* both of them went to Janakpur alongwith him. Thereafter the bow was broken and all brothers got married. They all returned to Ayodhya and lived there merrily. Bharata, Śatrughna went to their maternal uncle. Thereafter the preparations were made to coronate Rāma as per the wishes of the king and suggestions from the ministers and subjects. Lakṣmaṇa's joy was boundless to see this. How eager he was to

see Rāma on the throne is seen in the burst of his anger when the orders were passed for exilement instead of coronation. The more there happens anything against the wishes, the more angry one gets.

Mantharā also provoking Kaikeyī, praises the love of Lakṣmaṇa in this way—

गोप्ता हि रामं सौमित्रिर्लक्ष्मणं चापि राघवः।
अश्विनोरिव सौभ्रात्रं तयोर्लोकेषु विश्रुतम्॥

(Vāl. II.2.8. 31)

"Lakṣmaṇa always guards Rāma and so does Rāma to Lakṣmaṇa. The cord of love between the two is known in the world like that of Aśvinīkumāras."

After this when Śrī Rāma went to the palace to obtain permission from mother Kausalyā after he made his mind to go the forest, Lakṣmaṇa was also there. He always followed Rāma. Śrī Rāma reported everything to mother. Kausalyā's pain was limitless. The mother tried to stop him. He did not agree. Lakṣmaṇa did not approve of this course adopted by Rāma. He was a true follower of Rāma but he could not keep quiet to see Rāma abandoning his claim. Seeing mother Kausalyā wailing Lakṣmaṇa says—

अनुरक्तोऽस्मि भावेन भ्रातरं देवि तत्त्वतः।
सत्येन धनुषा चैव दत्तेनेष्टेन ते शपे॥
दीप्तमग्निमरण्यं वा यदि रामः प्रवेक्ष्यति।
प्रविष्टं तत्र मां देवि त्वं पूर्वमवधारय॥
हरामि वीर्याद् दुःखं ते तमः सूर्य इवोदितः।
देवी पश्यतु मे वीर्यं राघवश्चैव पश्यतु॥

(VāL.II.21. 16—18)

"*Devi*, I swear by my truthfulness, my bow, by charity I have given and *Yajñas* I have performed that I have whole hearted love for venerable brother Rāma. If Rāma enters into fire or in a dense forest, take it that I am already there ahead of Rāma. I will wipe away your sorrow with my valour just as the sun after rising removes the darkness. Watch my valour let Rāma also see it.

Charged with the sentiment of bravery and motivated by Rāma'a love, Lakṣmaṇa said many more things full of courage. After consoling the mother Śrī Rāma said to Lakṣmaṇa for his consolation—

तव लक्ष्मण जानामि मयि स्नेहमनुत्तमम्।
विक्रमं चैव सत्त्वं च तेजश्च सुदुरासदम्॥
मम मातुर्महद् दुःखमतुलं शुभलक्षण।
अभिप्रायं न विज्ञाय सत्यस्य च शमस्य च॥
धर्मो हि परमो लोके धर्मे सत्यं प्रतिष्ठितम्।

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सोऽहं न शक्ष्यामि पुनर्नियोगमतिवर्तितुम्।
पितुर्हि वचनाद्वीर कैकेय्याहं प्रचोदितः॥
तदेतां विसृजानार्यां क्षत्रधर्माश्रितां मतिम्।
धर्ममाश्रय मा तैक्ष्ण्यं मद्बुद्धिरनुगम्यताम्॥

(Vāl. II.21.39-41, 43-44)

"Lakṣmaṇa I know your extreme love for me and also I am not unacquainted with your valour, patience and terrific effulgence. The pain that my mother is experiencing is due to not comprehending the real form of truth and self-control. O prince endowed with noble characteristics, *Dharma* alone is the best in the

world and in it is established the truth. Therefore I, such as I am, cannot overrule the orders of my father. Mother Kaikeyī asked me to go to the forest only by the orders of my father. Thus give up this mean mentality which is based only on *Kṣatriya Dharma*. Follow *Dharma*. Get rid of short temperedness; act according to what I say."

It was a characteristic of Lakṣmaṇa's nature that he put before Rāma what he thought, in strongest possible way but always accepted whatever Rāma said even if it was against his liking. His was the nature full of valour and bravery. This is why when Rāma tried to convince him by overemphasizing destiny, he said—

विक्लवो वीर्यहीनो यः स दैवमनुवर्तते।
वीराः संभावितात्मानो न दैवं पर्युपासते॥
दैवं पुरुषकारेण यः समर्थः प्रबाधितुम्।
न दैवेन विपन्नार्थः पुरुषः सोऽवसीदति॥

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अद्य मे पौरुषहतं दैवं द्रक्ष्यन्ति वै जनाः।
यैर्दैवादाहतं तेऽद्य दृष्टं राज्याभिषेचनम्॥

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अहमेको महीपालानलं वारयितुं बलात्॥
न शोभार्थाविमौ बाहू न धनुर्भूषणाय मे।
नासिराबन्धनार्थाय न शराः स्तम्भहेतवः॥

(Vāl.II.23. 16-17, 19, 29-30)

"On the Prārabdha depend only they who are cowards and without valour. The braves whom the world admires, do not depend upon *Daiva*. The person capable of overpowering *Daiva* by his valour, does

not feel sorry when *Daiva* presents some obstacle in his way. People by whom your coronation has been seen interrupted through destiny today will find fate worsted this very day by my valour. I am enough to repel monarchs forcibly single handed. These two arms of mine are not just for show nor is the bow for ornamentation. This sword is not meant for hanging only nor are the arrows meant for prop."

After the talk with Kausalyā and Sītā when he knew about the final decision of Rāma, he gave up all his arguing and got ready to follow Śrī Rāma come what may.

Observing Śrī Rāma ready for forest, he was so eager to go with him. The idea of separation from his brother became unbearable. His eyes started shedding tears. Catching hold of the feet of the brother with his both hands he spoke to highly renowned Sītā as also to Śrī Rāma of hard vows—

यदि गन्तुं कृता बुद्धिर्वनं मृगगजायुतम्।
अहं त्वानुगमिष्यामि वनमग्रे धनुर्धरः॥

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नं देवलोकाक्रमणं नामरत्वमहं वृणे।
ऐश्वर्यं चापि लोकानां कामये न त्वया विना॥

(Vāl.II.31. 3, 5)

"O Lord! If you have made up your mind to go to the forest full of wild animals and thousands of elephants, then I shall go ahead of you with bow in my hands ..... I do not want even heaven without you nor do I wish godhood nor the lordship of all the worlds."

After hearing so, Śrī Ràma in his consoling words, pleaded to Lakṣmaṇa to remain in Ayodhya. Then Lakṣmaṇa again said—

अनुज्ञातस्तु भवता पूर्वमेव यदस्म्यहम्।
किमिदानीं पुनरपि क्रियते मे निवारणम्॥

(Vāl.II.31. 7)

"You have already permitted me to remain with you. Now why do you forbid me?" Then Śrī Rāma said—

स्निग्धो धर्मरतो धीरः सततं सत्पथे स्थितः।
प्रियः प्राणसमो वश्यो विजेयश्च सखा च मे॥
मयाद्य सह सौमित्रे त्वयि गच्छति तद्वनम्।
को भजिष्यति कौसल्यां सुमित्रां वा यशस्विनीम्॥

(Vāl.II.31. 10-11)

"Lakṣmaṇa! you are of loving nature, religious minded, steadfast and you always tread on right path. You are dear to me like my life, subordinate, obedient and a friend also. If you also accompany me to day for the forest, who will be there to look after the venerable Sumtirā and Kausalyā? Then Lakṣmaṇa said—

तदात्मभरणे चैव मम मातुस्तथैव च।
पर्याप्ता मद्विधानां च भरणाय मनस्विनी॥
कुरुष्व मामनुचरं वैधर्म्यं नेह विद्यते।
कृतार्थोऽहं भविष्यामि तव चार्थः प्रकल्प्यते॥

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आहरिष्यामि ते नित्यं मूलानि च फलानि च।
वन्यानि च तथान्यानि स्वाहार्हाणि तपस्विनाम्॥
भवांस्तु सह वैदेह्या गिरिसानुषु रंस्यसे।
अहं सर्वं करिष्यामि जाग्रतः स्वपतश्च ते॥

(Vāl.II.31. 23-24, 26-27)

"The high minded mother Kausalyā is enough to look after herself as well as my mother and many more like me. So make me your attendant. There is nothing against *Dharma* in it. By doing so I shall feel blessed and I will be attending to you too.....I shall always gather for you fruits, beetroots and other necessary wild things and the oblation materials befitting for ascetics. You would be enjoying with Sītā on the mountain peaks and I will do everything for you whether you are sleeping or wakeful. What a wonderful servitude. No care at all for personal comfort.

Now there remained nothing to discuss. Seeing this loveful insistence of Lakṣmaṇa, the Lord was compelled to accept his request. When Śrī Rāma asked him to bid farewell to his mother he immediately went there, took permission from the mother and came back. After that while going to the forest when Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa bade *Praṇāma* to Sumitrā she smelled Lakṣmaṇa's head and said—

सृष्टस्त्वं वनवासाय स्वनुरक्तः सुहृज्जने।
रामे प्रमादं मा कार्षीः पुत्र भ्रातरि गच्छति॥
व्यसनी वा समृद्धो वा गतिरेष तवानघ।
एष लोके सतां धर्मो यज्ज्येष्ठवशगो भवेत्॥

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रामं दशरथं विद्धि मां विद्धि जनकात्मजाम्।
अयोध्यामटवीं विद्धि गच्छ तात यथासुखम्॥

(Vā1.II. 40.5-6, 9)

"My son You love Rāma. Therefore, I permit you for the forest. Your brother is going to the forest. Never be careless there in serving him. Oh sinless one,

whether he is in a perilous situation or prosperous one, he is your supreme abode. In the world this is the only *Dharma* of a good man to remain under the subordination of his elder brother..... you should take Rāma in place of your father Daśaratha and Sītā in my place. Take forest to be Ayodhya. Go, my son, and be happy."

What a good advice! Alas! all mothers be like this Lakṣmaṇa also followed her instructions to the letter with his heart and soul.

After that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa set out for the forest on a chariot brought by Sumantra. The gentry also choked with emotion followed them. When they refused to go back even after considerable admonishing, Śrī Rāma alongwith Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, left them sleeping on the banks of *Tamasā* and went for Shringverpur. There he met Guha the ruler of *Niṣādas* and communicated news to him. Lakṣmaṇa brought water from *Gaṅgā* after *Sandhyā* worship. Drinking that water Śrī Rāma and Sītā slept on the leafy bed made by Lakṣmaṇa. At that time Lakṣmaṇa washed Rāma's feet and himself took his seat beneath a nearby tree. Guha saw Lakṣmaṇa waking for the sake of his brotherly devotion and said—"Brother Lakṣmaṇa! the bed is ready for you. Go and sleep comfortably. I with my men, will keep a strict watch with bow in my hand."

Śrī Lakṣmaṇa praised him for that and said—

कथं दाशरथौ भूमौ शयाने सह सीतया।
शक्या निद्रा मया लब्धुं जीवितं वा सुखानि वा॥
यो न देवासुरैः सर्वैः शक्यः प्रसहितुं युधि।
तं पश्य सुखसंसुप्तं तृणेषु सह सीतया॥

(Vāl.II. 51. 9-10)

"Oh ruler of Niṣādas, When Śrī Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, alongwith Sītā is sleeping on the ground, how can I get sleep or how is it possible for me to accept the comforts of life? Just see, even whom all gods and demons put together cannot face in the battlefield, it is that Śrī Rāma sleeping today alongwith Sītā comfortably on the bed of leafs."

After that as soon as it was morning Śrī Rāma reached the bank of *Gaṅgā* and sent Sumantra back. Then all the three boarded in the boat and crossed the *Gaṅgā*. There they halted during night beneath a tree across the river *Varadā*. Lakṣmaṇa cleaned the ground there and spread the tender leafs. Śrī Rāma and Sītā sat on that there. Śrī Rāma worrying for mother and father said to Lakṣmaṇa—"Lakṣmaṇa, go you back to Ayodhya and serve the mother. Let me alone go to the forest." This made Lakṣmaṇa to make a reply in a most heart rending way—

न च सीता त्वया हीना न चाहमपि राघव।
मुहूर्तमपि जीवावो जलान्मत्स्याविवोद्धृतौ॥
नहि तातं न शत्रुघ्नं न सुमित्रां परंतप।
द्रष्टुमिच्छेयमद्याहं स्वर्गं चापि त्वया विना॥

(Vāl.II. 53.31-32)

"Oh delight of Raghus, Neither Sītā nor I can live without you even a moment like a fish out of water. Oh scorcher of the foes, presently I do not want to see Sumitrā or the father or the brother Śatrughna or

even heaven without you."

After it was dawn they left the place and met the *Muni* Bharadwāja and took rest there for a day. The next day they started for Chitrakoot through the path guided by him. Reaching the bank of *Yamunā* Lakṣmaṇa made boat to cross the river. For Sītā to sit in, he made a beautiful throne of cane. The bashful Sītā somehow sat on it. Lakṣmaṇa with Rāma oared that boat across the *Yamunā*. After getting down from the boat they went ahead—Lakṣmaṇa ahead, then Sītā and then Rāma guarding both of them from behind. This way they walked to Chitrakoot. There they met the sage Vālmīki. Then with the permission of Śrī Rāma Lakṣmaṇa himself made a beautiful hut. They lived in it comfortably.

While living in the forest, Lakṣmaṇa most happily did all sorts of jobs such as bringing fruits and beetroot and the material for oblation, carrying Sītā's box of jewels and clothes from one place to the other and taking care of them. During winter nights going to the river through the fields and fetching water from there, in order to recognise the path, making marks on the trees and stones by putting rags on them, brooming, smearing the ground, making platform for sitting, collecting fuel wood and finally keeping awake throughout the night and having a watch. After this when Bharata came to Chitrakoot accompanied by the army with the intention to take Rāma back, at that time Lakṣmaṇa doubted the bonafide of Bharata and motivated by love to Rāma, uttered some harsh words

for Bharata. when Śrī Rāma praised Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa kept silent. Bharata having met everybody and taking the *Pādukās* of Śrī Rāma went back to Ayodhya. This side Śrī Rāma alongwith Śīta and Lakṣmaṇa left Chitrakoot and visiting the *Āśramas* of the ascetics like Atri, reached Panchavati. There Śrī Rāma said to Lakṣmaṇa—"It is the place where we intended to come. Here find out a suitable place approved by all, where myself, you and Jānakī may live and where there might be water, flowers and *Kuśa* available nearby. Then Lakṣmaṇa not relying on his skill, said—

परवानस्मि काकुत्स्थ त्वयि वर्षशतं स्थिते।
स्वयं तु रुचिरे देशे क्रियतामिति मां वद॥

(Vā1.III. 15.7)

"I am always subordinated to you even if you live hundreds of years. Oh Lord of Raghus (in your presence I will do nothing on my own). Therefore, select you a place of your own choice and tell me to make *Āśrama.*"

It does not mean that Lakṣmaṇa was deprived of wisdom. He was talented and scholarly and used his talent from time to time for the service of Śrī Rāma. But he was more satisfied with what Rāma himself did.

Thereafter Śrī Rāma showed him a place and pointed out its advantages and beauty. Immediately Lakṣmaṇa, as per the instructions of the brother, got an *Āśrama* ready, fit for living and made therein a hut also quite big and beautiful. Śrī Rāmā and Sītā were very much pleased to see that *Āśrama* and hut and Rāma praised the skill of Lakṣmaṇa and embraced

him. They lived there comfortably.

There they passed *Śarad Ṛtu. Hemanta* set in. One day while Śrī Rama was going with Sītā for bath, Lakṣmaṇa most humbly said to Rāma—

अस्मिंस्तु पुरुषव्याघ्र काले दुःखसमन्वितः।
तपश्चरति धर्मात्मा त्वद्भक्त्या भरतः पुरे॥
त्यक्त्वा राज्यं च मानं च भोगांश्च विविधान् बहून्।
तपस्वी नियताहारः शेते शीते महीतले॥
सोऽपि वेलामिमां नूनमभिषेकार्थमुद्यतः।
वृतः प्रकृतिभिर्नित्यं प्रयाति सरयूं नदीम्॥
अत्यन्तसुखसंवृद्धः सुकुमारो हिमार्दितः।
कथं त्वपररात्रेषु सरयूमवगाहते॥

(Vā1.III. 16.27—30)

"Oh *Puruṣottama!* In this chilly season the pious Bharata, though living in the town, is practising penances suffering odds. He is busy in penance leaving the kingship and all enjoyments, taking scanty food and sleeping on the ground even in this winter season. Certainly he would be going in the very early hours to *Sarayū* for bath alongwith the ministers and other subjects. How could Bharata so tender and brought up in luxury, be bearing the winter inconveniences and taking a dip in *Sarayū* in the last hours of night?"

This falsifies the opinion of those who think that Lakṣmaṇa loved only Rāma and was always jealous to Bharata. Indeed he did not excuse those who caused pain to Śrī Rāma and slighted him but when he came to know that Bharata is not at all guilty and he is living an ascetic's life due to separation of Rāma, since

then his faith, love and admiration enhanced even more than before.

One day it so happened that in Panchavati *Āśrama* Śrī Rāma was talking to Lakṣmaṇa. Both were sitting. In the mean time Śūrpaṇakhā came there and put the proposal to Śrī Rāma to marry her. Śrī Rāma sent her to Lakṣmaṇa. Śūrpaṇakhā repeated the same proposal to Lakṣmaṇa also. Lakṣmaṇa replied smilingly.

कथं दासस्य मे दासी भार्या भवितुमिच्छसि।
सोऽहमार्येण परवान् भ्रात्रा कमलवर्णिनि॥

(Vāl. III. 18.9)

He said to her "I am a slave, subordinate to my brother Śrī Rāma oh! Lotus hued. Why do you want to be a maid being my wife? (Better you go to Śrī Rāma)."

She came back to Śrī Rāma. There when she attacked Sītā then Lakṣmaṇa with permission of Rāma chopped off her ears and nose.

There after demons like Khara and Dūṣana attacked Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma having seen them coming said to Lakṣmaṇa (undoubtedly you can kill these demons but) myself want to do this job. Therefore take you Sītā into the cave and guard her. Lakṣmaṇa followed his instructions. Śrī Rāma killed all demons. Thereafter instigated by Śūrpaṇakhā, Rāvaṇa went to Panchavati alongwith Mārica for the purpose of abducting Sītā. There Mārica adopted the form of a strange golden deer and attracted Sītā towards him. Requested by Sītā Lord Rāma set out with bow and arrow to kill him and followed him. Mārīca was killed. While breathing his last he imitated the tone of Rāma and cried. Oh!

Sītā. Oh! Lakṣmaṇa. So saying he screamed loudly. Hearing that Sītā was unnerved. She thought that Rāma is in some peril. She asked Lakṣmaṇa to run at once for his help. Even though Sītā insisted much yet Lakṣmaṇa was adamant for guarding her as per the orders of Śrī Rāma. Then Sītā doubted his brotherly love and his intention and uttered many unbecoming words and blamed him. Yet Lakṣmaṇa did not budge even an inch. He described the prowess of Śrī Rāma and conjuring of the demons and tried to convince Sītā. But Sītā was not satisfied and in the fury of anger she taunted Lakṣmaṇa and said many things unbecoming. Then Lakṣmaṇa left Sītā under the guard of gods and went to Śrī Rāma. It was the first chance for Lakṣmaṇa to disobey Rāma.

This side Rāvaṇa in the guise of a monk abducted Sītā and on the other hand Lakṣmaṇa intercepted Śrī Rāma while he was coming to *Āśrama*. Śrī Rāma said to Lakṣmaṇa. It is very bad that you left Sītā alone and came here. He said so many similar things. Then Lakṣmaṇa replied—

न स्वयं कामकारेण तां त्यक्त्वाहमिहागतः।
प्रचोदितस्तयैवोग्रैस्त्वत्सकाशमिहागतः ॥

(Vāl. III. 59.6)

"Oh! Lord, I have not come here on my own accord. I have had to come here compelled by her harsh words."

This way Lakṣmaṇa narrated everything to Śrī Rāma. Even then he was not satisfied. He lamented and somehow reached the hermitage. Seeing the hut

empty Rāma started weeping due to the separation from Sītā. Lakṣmaṇa consoled him very much. In the same way whenever Śrī Rāma got impatient in the separation of Śītā, then Lakṣmaṇa very affectionately reminded him of his prowess and consoled him.

The two brothers roaming here and there in search of Sītā reached where Jatāyu was. He performed the funerals of Jatāyu, killed Kabandha and with his advice went to *Pampāsara.* There he met Śabarī. When he further proceeded Hanumān caused him to befriend Sugrīva. Sugrīva showed to Śrī Rāma the clothes and ornaments dropped by Sītā. Then Śrī Rāma took those things to his bosom and asked Lakṣmaṇa to see them. Lakṣmaṇa saw them and said—

नाहं जानामि केयूरे नाहं जानामि कुण्डले॥
नूपुरे त्वभिजानामि नित्यं पादाभिवन्दनात्।
(Vāl. IV. 6. 22-23)

"Oh! Lord! I do not recognise the armlets of Sītā nor the ear rings. But I do recognise her *Nūpuras* (anklets) because everyday I adored her feet and saw them." What a beautiful ideal of *Brahmacarya* and veneration?

Thereafter a discussion with Sugrīva took place. Then followed fighting between Bāli and Sugrīva. Śrī Rāma killed Bāli with a single shot of arrow. Sugrīva was enthroned as king of Kiṣkindhā. Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa passed the rainy season on the mount Pravarṣaṇa and the *Śarad* approached. Sugrīva on the other side indulged with mundane enjoyment and forgot the mission of Rāma. Then Lakṣmaṇa directed

by Rāma went to Sugrīva. In that context *Vālmīkī Rāmāyaṇa* presents a vivid description of the bravery, steadfastness and high character of Lakṣmaṇa. While admonishing Sugrīva, says Lakṣmaṇa—

पूर्वं कृतार्थो मित्राणां न तत्प्रतिकरोति यः।
कृतघ्नः सर्वभूतानां स वध्यः प्लवगेश्वर॥
गोघ्ने चैव सुरापे च चौरे भग्नव्रते तथा।
निष्कृतिर्विहिता सद्भिः कृतघ्ने नास्ति निष्कृतिः॥

(Vāl. IV. 34. 10, 12)

"Oh, king of monkeys, He is supposed to be ungrateful who get his mission fulfilled with the help of his friends and then forgets to return the service rendered by them, thus deserves to be killed by everybody. Even for a cow-killer, a drinker, a thief and one who breaks vow—there are expiatory measures prescribed by the wise men but there is no expiation for ungrateful."

Then Tārā pleaded with all humility and got him pacified. Then to Lakṣmaṇa in a guarded way Sugrīva said—

कः शक्तस्तस्य देवस्य ख्यातस्य स्वेन कर्मणा।
तादृशं प्रतिकुर्वीत अंशेनापि नृपात्मज॥
सीतां प्राप्स्यति धर्मात्मा वधिष्यति च रावणम्।
सहायमात्रेण मया राघवः स्वेन तेजसा॥

(Vāl. IV. 36. 6-7)

"Lord Rāma is well known for his (valorous) deeds. He is God in person. How can one repay even partly the act of benevolence done by him? The pious Śrī Rāma is competent to kill Rāvaṇa with his own prowess and get Sītā back. I will be only instrumental in helping him."

Having heard this Lakṣmaṇa was pleased and after praising Sugrīva he came back to Śrī Rāma. In the mean time innumerable monkeys called by Sugrīva reached there. They were sent in all quarters for searching Sītā. Śrī Hanumān went to Lanka and met Śrī Jānakī. Then he came back and reported the pitiable condition of Sītā to Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. After receiving the news of Sītā, Śrī Rāma and lakṣmaṇa accompanied by a huge monkey army reached the shore of the sea. There Śrī Rāma assured Vibhīṣaṇa against all fears. The bridge was built over the sea and Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa alongwith the army reached the other shore of the sea. A terrific battle was fought against the demons in Lanka. One day it so happened that Meghanāda killed an illusory Sītā before the eyes of all monkeys and made them sorrowful. When Śrī Rāma came to know this through Hanumān, he swooned. Treatment was given to bring him back to his senses. Lakṣmaṇa pleaded in the favour of valour and said to Śrī Rāma.

तदद्य विपुलं वीर दुःखमिन्द्रजिता कृतम्।
कर्मणा व्यपनेष्यामि तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ राघव॥
उत्तिष्ठ नरशार्दूल दीर्घबाहो धृतव्रत।
किमात्मानं महात्मानमात्मानं नावबुध्यसे॥

(Vāl. VI. 83. 42-43)

"O brave one! whatever pain Indrajit has inflicted upon you I will remove it by my horrifying actions. Therefore get up, please. Oh big armed, a lion among men, are you not aware of the prowess of your greatness? Oh! observer of vows, please get up."

While Lakṣmaṇa was trying to awake 'Śrī Rāma sleeping in his lap in a swooned condition, in the mean time Vibhīṣaṇa arrived there. Questioned by Vibhīṣaṇa Lakṣmaṇa reported to him that Śrī Rāma became unconscious and aggrieved for Sītā. Then Vibhīṣaṇa convinced Śrī Rāma through his forceful arguments that Meghanāda cannot kill Sītā. This corpse is a play of demoniacal conjuring. You need not be worried. At this moment Meghanāda has gone to Nikumbhilā to perform sacrifice. If the sacrifice is complete, it will be very difficult to conquer him. We should reach there soon and fight out him. Therfore send Lakṣmaṇa with us. Having so heard Śrī Rāma came to conciousness. He heard the full report again from Vibhīṣaṇa. Then he informed Lakṣmaṇa of the valour and illusory power of Meghanāda and said to him. Go with Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa and kill him. Then Lakṣmaṇa took oath to kill Meghanāda, made circumambulation of Śrī Rāma and saluted him. Thereafter he took Vibhīṣaṇa and the army with him and went. There a fierce battle took place between him and Meghanāda. In it Lakṣmaṇa showed his extraordinary bravery, steadfastness and military skill. Lakṣmaṇa killed the horses, charioteer and broke choriot and cut his bows many times one after the other. This way he unnerved the entire demon army. Eventually he killed Meghanāda which was a unique feat. Thereafter he went to Śrī Rāma and saluted him. Śrī Rāma embraced Lakṣmaṇa and paid encomiums to him for his achievement and said—

कृतं परमकल्याणं कर्म दुष्करकर्मणा।
अद्य मन्ये हते पुत्रे रावणं निहतं युधि॥
अद्याहं विजयी शत्रौ हते तस्मिन् दुरात्मनि।
(Vāl. VI. 91. 13-14)

Lakṣmaṇa you are the doer of actions most difficult to do. You have done this job which is most benedictory. After the death of the vile Meghanāda—the son of Rāvaṇa—now I suppose that Rāvaṇa is already killed by Meghanāda being killed. Our victory is now assured. After this ordered by Śrī Rāma Suṣena administered medical treatment to Lakṣmaṇa and removed all his bodily pain. This treatment made Lakṣmaṇa well as usual.

When Rāvaṇa came to learn through the demons that Lakṣmaṇa killed Meghanāda he was extremely pained. The infuriated Rāvaṇa launched an attack with his army. There was fighting. In that fight Lakṣmaṇa became unconscious struck by the Śaktī of Rāvaṇa. Rāma was very sad to see this. He recollecting the love and services of Lakṣmaṇa lamented in a most pathetic way. This also shows the love of Lakṣmaṇa. After that Suṣeṇa got medicines through Hanumān and cured Lakṣmaṇa. He woke up and became hale and healthy. There took place a terrific battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa in which Rāvaṇa was done away with. Sītā was called. She was accorded honour befitting to a queen and was going in a palanquin but Śrī Rāma ordered Vibhīṣaṇa to bring her on her foot. It pinched Lakṣmaṇa very much but he said nothing realizing that such was the wish of the lord. Śrī Rāma ill behaved

when Sītā reached there. Lakṣmaṇa was sad yet as Sītā said and he thought that the same was intention of Rāma he built the pyre. Sītā was put to a fire test. All gods arrived. The King Daśaratha also came there. Śrī Daśaratha inspired Lakṣmaṇa to be always ready for the service of Rāma who was of a great prowess. Thereafter mounting on the *Puṣpaka,* the air craft, they all reached Ayodhya and met mothers, Bharata and Śatrughna. Śrī Rāma was enthroned. The rest of the three brothers started serving him. This way a considerable period elapsed in merry-making.

After that there was a censorious gossip that Rāma kept Sītā in his house. Śrī Rāma knew it and decided to abandon Sītā. At that time Śrī Rāma summoned all his brothers and said—"Listen you all very calmly to what I say. I am being censured everywhere on account of Sītā. Although Sītā went through the fire test in Lanka and proved her credibility to all and sundry; although all gods and *Maharṣis* declared Sītā to be sinless in the presence of Lakṣmaṇa. I myself know that Sītā is faultless yet I find myself unable to bear this calumny any more. Therefore Lakṣmaṇa go you tomorrow morning in a gold decorated chariot and leave Sītā near the *Āśrama* of *Ṛṣi* Vālmīki across *Gaṅgā.*

It was an order from Śrī Rāma most terrible for Lakṣmaṇa. But Śrī Rāma knew that apart from Lakṣmaṇa nobody else could carry it out. He had full confidence in the love of Lakṣmaṇa. This is why he specifically ordered Lakṣmaṇa to do this heart

rending job. Śrī Rāma stopped him from putting any argument with swearing by his own name. So Lakṣmaṇa could not make any reply even. In this context what an unbearable torture Lakṣmana suffered and implemented this order for the sake of vow to obey (his elder brother's command)—this can be to some extent realised, only by reading the relevant context. In this small article it cannot be thoroughly expressed. While leaving Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa immersed into grief, tells Sītā—

हृद्गतं मे महच्छल्यं यस्मादार्येण धीमता।
अस्मिन्निमित्ते वैदेहि लोकस्य वचनीकृतः॥

(Vāl. VII. 47. 4)

"My heart is pierced by thorn as I am deputed by the wise Rāma to do this most condemnable job, Oh Vaidehī."

Besides, Lakṣmaṇa also said that death have been more welcome to him than this. Only Lakṣmaṇa could implement such a cruel task. While coming back Lakṣmaṇa was worried throughout about how Rāma could hold his life without Sītā. This way conversing with Sumantra, Lakṣmaṇa reached Ayodhya and met Śrī Rāma. At that time Lakṣmaṇa had all marks of sorrow on his face. He bade *Praṇāma* to Śrī Rāma and submitted full report in connection with deserting Sītā and also consoled him. Śrī Rāma got pleased and said—"Brother Lakṣmaṇa, it is rare to get a friend like you in a crisis. Oh good looking one, you are very wise and follow my wishes."

After this *Aśvamedha* was arranged. *Ṛṣi* Vālmīki also arrived there alongwith Sītā, Kuśa and Lava. Kuśa and Lava recited the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* under the orders of Śrī Rāma. Sītā proved her chastity before all and sundry. She entered into the earth.

After that an ascetic came there with a message from Brahmā. He took words from Rāma that whoever overhears their talk or sees them, Rāma must kill him. He delivered the message of Brahmā in regard of Śrī Rāma's final departure from the world. In the mean time *Ṛṣi* Durvāsā came. He wished to meet Rāma immediately. In order to save the entire family from his curse Lakṣmaṇa having given up all desire for his life, went there to inform Rāma about the arrival of Durvāsā. Then he himself encouraged Rāma to kill him. Thereafter Śrī Rāma consulted everybody and with the result he abandoned Lakṣmaṇa. Then unable to bear his separation he did not stay in the world even for a day and going to the bank of *Sarayū* he went to his final abode through his Yogic power.

Who can tell the glory of Lakṣmaṇa? In his life only is found a wonderful blend of ultimate good and love, wisdom and guilelessness, offering good advice and obedience, prowess and friendship; and nowhere else. The whole world praises Śrī Rāma. Śrī Rāma praised Bharata and both of them praised the qualities of Lakṣmaṇa. How can I then describe his merits in such a small article"

The Ideal Life of Bharata

The life of Bharata is ideal and very bright. No fault at all is seen in him. His glory is boundless. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* he is said to be partial incarnation of Viṣṇu. Side by side his life proves him to be a crest jewel among saints, ideally faithful to his lord, great souled, desireless and a *Karmayogī* with devotion as a dominant factor. Bharata knew piety and ethics, rich in all good qualities, renouncer, self restrained, of good conduct, an embodiment of love and humility, full of faith and very wise. The qualities like dispassion, truth, penance, forbearance, endurance, kindness, fatherly love, steadfastness, bravery, reservedness, simplicity, serenity, sweetness, pridelessness and friendliness were wonderfully developed in him. He was as if enlivened image of brotherly affection.

The filial piety of Bharata—

After marriage Bharata soon left with his maternal uncle to his kingdom. This is why the description of his filial piety in Rāmāyaṇa is not in plenty. But while he was at his maternal uncle's home on play he talked about his bad dream among his friends and expressed his concern for his father and when he came back to Ayodhya and learnt about the demise of his father through the mother, he was shocked extremely and he wailed and lamented for his father—all this shows his filial devotion and faithfulness. When the mother

asked him to have patience, he replied—

अभिषेक्ष्यति रामं तु राजा यज्ञं तु यक्ष्यते।
इत्यहं कृतसंकल्पो हृष्टो यात्रामयासिषम्॥
तदिदं ह्यन्यथाभूतं व्यवदीर्णं मनो मम।
पितरं यो न पश्यामि नित्यं प्रियहिते रतम्॥

(Vāl. II. 72. 27-28)

"I thought that the king would coronate Śrī Rāma on the throne and himself get initiated for *Yajña*. With this very thought I started from there but after coming here I found everything topsy turvy. My heart is breaking as I do not see my father who always did what was dear and benedictory to me."

Brotherly devotion—

While he was expressing his sorrow for the father, his heart was suddenly overflowed with the love for Rāma and he says—

यो मे भ्राता पिता बन्धुर्यस्य दासोऽस्मि संमतः।
तस्य मां शीघ्रमाख्याहि रामस्याक्लिष्टकर्मणः॥
पिता हि भवति ज्येष्ठो धर्ममार्यस्य जानतः।
तस्य पादौ ग्रहीष्यामि स हीदानीं गतिर्मम॥

(Vāl. II. 72. 32-33)

"Please inform Śrī Rāma who is my brother, father and friend, whose dear servant I am and who always performs pious deeds, about my arrival. The elder brother is just like father for a meritorious person who knows *Dharma*. I will touch his feet and bid my *Praṇāma*. Now he alone. is my refuge."

Then Kaikeyī narrated all incidents that took place and asked him to accept kingship.

Hearing from Kaikeyī regarding the exilement of brothers to the forest Bharata was stunned. He with a choked heart scolded his mother and said—

लुब्धाया विदितो मन्ये न तेऽहं राघवं यथा।
तथा ह्यनर्थो राज्यार्थं त्वयाऽऽनीतो महानयम्॥

(Vāl. II. 73. 13)

"I think you could not so far realize due to your greed what sentiment I have for Śrī Rāma. This is why you brought this crisis for the kingdom."

This apart, so many other things Bharata told to his mother. After that he happened to meet Kausalyā in the way while she was coming to meet him and started weeping in her arms. Thereafter he assured Kausalyā by swearing in many ways that he had concurrence in the exilement of Śrī Rāma.

After that as per instruction of the sage Vasiṣṭha the preparations were made for the funeral of king Daśaratha. At that time when Bharata saw the dead body of the king he started weeping and said—

किं ते व्यवसितं राजन् प्रोषिते मय्यनागते।
विवास्य रामं धर्मज्ञं लक्ष्मणं च महाबलम्॥

(Vāl. II. 76-6)

"Oh king! how did you decide to send to the forest the pious Śrī Rāma and mighty Lakṣmaṇa while I was out in some other country and could not even come to you.?"

To see Bharata lamenting this way the great sage Vasiṣṭha again admonishes him. After that with due formality the funeral ceremony of Daśaratha was

performed. Coming to the city Bharata slept on the ground for ten days and passed his time in agony.

After getting free from the *Śrāddha* etc., Śrī Vasiṣṭha and other counsellors came to royal court and insisted upon Bharata to assume the kingship. Then Bharata said, "Myself and this kingdom both belong to Śrī Rāma. I request you all to teach me *Dharma.* Śrī Rāma is senior to me in every respect. Therefore—

राममेवानुगच्छामि स राजा द्विपदां वरः।
त्रयाणामपि लोकानां राघवो राज्यमर्हति॥

× × ×

यदि त्वार्यं न शक्ष्यामि विनिवर्तयितुं वनात्।
वने तत्रैव वत्स्यामि यथार्यो लक्ष्मणस्तथा॥
सर्वोपायं तु वर्तिष्ये विनिवर्तयितुं बलात्।
समक्षमार्यमिश्राणां साधूनां गुणवर्तिनाम्॥

(Vāl. II. 82. 16, 18-19)

"Śrī Rāma the supreme among persons, deserves of being the Lord of all the three worlds, what to talk of Ayodhya only. I will follow his foot steps, I will try my best to get him back before all gentlemen like you. Even then if I fail to get Śrī Rāma back, I will also remain with him in the forest like the great Lakṣmaṇa." Having heard such words of Bharata charged with brotherly love, all counsellors had their eyes filled with tears."

When Bharata sets out for Chitrakoot accompanied by his army, he happens to have met Guha, the ruler of Niṣādas. Guha becomes suspicious to see such a huge four-winged army with him and he divulges it

before him. At that time Bharata tells Niṣāda—

मा भूत् स कालो यत् कष्टं न मां शङ्कितुमर्हसि।
राघवः स हि मे भ्राता ज्येष्ठः पितृसमो मतः॥
तं निवर्तयितुं यामि काकुत्स्थं वनवासिनम्।

(Vāl. II. 85.9-10)

"May such a painful occasion never come oh Ruler of *Niṣādas;* you may not doubt my bonafides as Śrī Rāma, the ornamentation of Raghu dynasty is my elder brother. I regard him as my father. I am going to take back that forest dwelling Rāma." Having heard what Bharata said, the face of Niṣādarāja brightened. He cheerfully said—

धन्यस्त्वं न त्वया तुल्यं पश्यामि जगतीतले।
अयत्नादागतं राज्यं यस्त्वं त्यक्तुमिहेच्छसि॥

(Vāl. II. 85. 12)

"Blessed are you that you want to discard kingship so effortlessly approached. I fail to see any other one like you on the earth" and so on.

This way both conversed for a long time. On account of separation from Rāma, the sorrowful Bharata, while meditating upon him, suddenly went into swoon. *Niṣāda* was enchanted to see this. After a shortwhile having gained normalcy Bharata asked Guha—

भ्राता मे क्वावसद्रात्रौ क्व सीता क्व च लक्ष्मणः।
अस्वपच्छयने कस्मिन् किं भुक्त्वा गुह शंस मे॥

(Vāl. II. 87. 13)

"Niṣādarāja! Where did my brother Rāma stay during the night alongwith Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa? What

did they eat and what beds they slept on? Tell me everything."

Guha was very much pleased when Bharata so asked and he narrated everything as it happened. He showed him the *Iṅgudī* tree and the bed of *Kuśa* where Śrī Rāma slept with Sītā during night. To see it, the condition of Bharata worsened strangely and he started crying—

हा हतोऽस्मि नृशंसोऽस्मि यत् सभार्यः कृते मम।
ईदृशीं राघवः शय्यामधिशेते ह्यनाथवत्॥
सार्वभौमकुले जातः सर्वलोकसुखावहः।
सर्वप्रियकरस्त्यक्त्वा राज्यं प्रियमनुत्तमम्॥
कथमिन्दीवरश्यामो रक्ताक्षः प्रियदर्शनः।
सुखभागी न दुःखार्हः शयितो भुवि राघवः॥
धन्यः खलु महाभागो लक्ष्मणः शुभलक्षणः।
भ्रातरं विषमे काले यो राममनुवर्तते॥

(Vāl. II. 88.17—20)

"Oh, I am gone. I am cruel for whose sake Śrī Rāma with chaste Sītā has to sleep on such a bed like an orphan. How does Śrī Rāma who is born in the clan of Emperors, comfortful for all, who does good to all, whose bodily hue is like blue lotus and eyes red, who deserves luxury in every way and in no way he deserves any suffering, who is good looking, sleeps on the ground? Blessed is the auspicious marked Lakṣmaṇa and fortunate also who living with him serves him in such a period of crisis." Bharata lamented this way and said so many other things of the same type.

Further going when he reached the hermitage of Bharadvāja, the *Maharṣi* after proper salutations asked a question very much pinching to his heart. He said—"For what purpose have you come to the forest? Is it for doing any harm to the pious and guiltless Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa? It caused tears in the eyes of Bharata. He spoke in a faltering voice—

हतोऽस्मि यदि मामेवं भगवानपि मन्यते।
मत्तो न दोषमाशङ्के मैवं मामनुशाधि हि॥
न चैतदिष्टं माता मे यदवोचन्मदन्तरे।
नाहमेतेन तुष्टश्च न तद्वचनमाददे॥
अहं तु तं नरव्याघ्रमुपयातः प्रसादकः।
प्रतिनेतुमयोध्यायां पादौ चास्याभिवन्दितुम्॥
तं मामेवंगतं मत्वा प्रसादं कर्तुमर्हसि।
शंस मे भगवन् रामः क्व संप्रति महीपतिः॥

(Vāl. II. 90.15—18)

"I have committed no fault sire, still if your Holiness reckons that I am guilty then I am done away with in everyway. Therefore do not say such harsh words to me. In my absence whatever my mother said or did, I do not relish it. I am not at all happy with it nor did I accept what she said. I have come to the forest in order to propitiate Śrī Rāma, the best among men, and take him back to Ayodhya and adore his feet. Taking me to have come for this reason be kind to me and tell me where the king Śrī Rāma is at present."

Hearing this Bharadvājajī was very much pleased and praising Bharata he said—

जाने चैतन्मनःस्थं ते दृढीकरणमस्त्विति।
अपृच्छं त्वां तवात्यर्थं कीर्तिं समभिवर्धयन्॥

(Vāl. II. 90. 21)

"I know, what is in your mind Oh Bharata, yet in order to strengthen it and to spread your fame much more, I have said so to you."

Thereafter much more conversation took place. Due to Bharadvāja's insistence, Bharata was compelled to accept his hospitality. The best among the sages did entertain Bharata with his entire army and the family in a unique manner. That night was passed with great joy. In the same context it has also been said—

तत्र राजासनं दिव्यं व्यजनं छत्रमेव च।
भरतो मन्त्रिभिः सार्धमभ्यवर्तत राजवत्॥
आसनं पूजयामास रामायाभिप्रणम्य च।
वालव्यजनमादाय न्यषीदत्सचिवासने॥

(Vāl. II. 91. 38-39)

"Bharata saw in that palace (which was made by the Muni with his Yogic power) beautiful throne, royal umbrella and chowry. He gave it respect like Śrī Rāma and so did his ministers. He first saluted Śrī Rāma and then adored the throne and having a chowry in his hand he occupied the seat meant for the minister."

How high is the sentiment and devotion. What a pious thought. What a pridelessness and what a renunciation.

When Bharata reached near Chitrakoot at that time Śrī Rāma saw dust raising in the sky and asked Lakṣmaṇa to find out the reason. Lakṣmaṇa surveyed

the situation from above a tree and came to conclusion that Bharata was coming with his army. He expressed his suspicion and uttered some harsh words. Then Śrī Rāma praising the qualities and love of Bharata, said—

प्राप्तकालं यथैषोऽस्मान् भरतो द्रष्टुमर्हति।
अस्मासु मनसाप्येष नाहितं किंचिदाचरेत्॥
विप्रियं कृतपूर्वं ते भरतेन कदा नु किम्।
ईदृशं वा भयं तेऽद्य भरतं यद् विशङ्कसे॥
नहि ते निष्ठुरं वाच्यो भरतो नाप्रियं वचः।
अहं ह्यप्रियमुक्तः स्यां भरतस्याप्रिये कृते॥

× × ×

यदि राज्यस्य हेतोस्त्वमिमां वाचं प्रभाषसे।
वक्ष्यामि भरतं दृष्ट्वा राज्यमस्मै प्रदीयताम्॥
उच्यमानो हि भरतो मया लक्ष्मण तद्वचः।
राज्यमस्मै प्रयच्छेति बाढमित्येव मंस्यते॥

(Vāl. II. 97. 13—15, 17-18)

"The way how Bharata is coming to see us is quite proper. He can never think of doing any harm to us. When and what harm Bharata did to you so that you are feeling fear from him and suspecting him? (After Bharata arrives) do not tell any harsh or unkind words to him. If you behave harshly or say any unkind words to him then I will consider it to have been done against me. If you say so for the sake of kingdom, I will tell him when he meets me, to hand over the kingdom to you. If I say so he will certainly approve of what I say and will give kingdom to you".

This way although Bharata was entirely faultless and pious yet he had to be a victim to everybody's

suspicion. It is a strange thing in the annals of history of the world that a person like Bharata who was entirely desireless, pious and renouncing, great man, became the target of suspicion of all. Even then Bharata brooked it all. Blessed is his love. Blessed is his devotion to the Lord and blessed is his tolerance. This side Bharata instructs Śatrughna and Guha and his important ministers to find out the hermitage of Śrī Rāma and says—

यावन्न चन्द्रसङ्काशं तद् द्रक्ष्यामि शुभाननम्।
भ्रातुः पद्मविशालाक्षं न मे शान्तिर्भविष्यति॥

× × ×

यावन्न चरणौ भ्रातुः पार्थिवव्यञ्जनान्वितौ।
शिरसा प्रग्रहीष्यामि न मे शान्तिर्भविष्यति॥
यावन्न राज्ये राज्यार्हः पितृपैतामहे स्थितः।
अभिषिक्तो जलक्लिन्नो न मे शान्तिर्भविष्यति॥

(Vāl. II. 98. 7, 9-10)

"I will not get peace until I see Śrī Rāma who has eyes big and like lotus petals, and his lotus face beautiful like moon. I will not get peace until I put my head at my borther's feet having marks of royalty. I will not get peace until the Lord Rāma who is real claimant for the kingdom, becomes wet with the consecrating water, is established on the throne of his ancestors." Saying so many things like this Bharata the best among men, entered the dense forest walking on foot for tracing out Śrī Rāma. He climbed on a tall tree and recognised the *Āśrama* of Śrī Rāma and Śrī Rāma himself sitting in it, from that distance. He

got a new life. He was glad enough and started for the *Āśrama* accompanied with Guha.

Reaching near the hermitage of Śrī Rāma, Bharata saw that the Lord of the entire world and the pious Rāma was sitting with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa on an earthen platform. He saw wearing garment of black deer skin and bark of tree. Matted locks were bedecking his head, his shoulders like that of a lion; eyes big like lotus and arms long, Seeing Śrī Rāma in such a way the *Mahātmā* Bharata was engulfed into grief. As soon as he saw his brother the sorrowful Bharata spoke in his choked voice lamenting—

यः संसदि प्रकृतिभिर्भवेद्युक्त उपासितुम्।
वन्यैर्मृगैरुपासीनः सोऽयमास्ते ममाग्रजः॥
वासोभिर्बहुसाहस्रैर्यो महात्मा पुरोचितः।
मृगाजिने सोऽयमिह प्रवस्ते धर्ममाचरन्॥

× × ×

मन्निमित्तमिदं दुःखं प्राप्तो रामः सुखोचितः।
धिग् जीवितं नृशंसस्य मम लोकविगर्हितम्॥

(Vāl. II. 99. 31-32, 36)

"Oh! My elder brother who is worthy to sit in the court and receive greetings of his subjects and ministers, is sitting here encircled by wild beasts. The same exalted soul who wore costly costumes worth of thousands in the city, practising *Dharma,* now lives in two garments of deer skin, Rāma who deserves luxurious life is now suffering this misfortune on my account. How cruel am I? Fie on my wreched life condemned by the world."

So wailing Bharata felt suffocated with sorrow. The tears rolled down on his lotus like face. His condition was quite miserable. Before he could touch Rāma's feet, he fell down like a wretch saying 'Oh Ārya', his throat was choked with sorrow. He could speak nothing. Then Śatrughna also bade his *Praṇāma* while he was also weeping. Watching Bharata with matted locks and in bark garments, Śrī Rāma could even hardly recognise him. He raised up both brothers and embraced. All tribals were shedding tears to watch Bharata's dealing.

Thereafter Śrī Rāma took Bharata in his lap and asked—"Brother, why did you abandon capital, have matted locks and deer skin and come here in the forest?" Then Bharata informed him of father's demise and said—

तथानुपूर्व्या युक्तश्च युक्तं चात्मनि मानद।
राज्यं प्राप्नुहि धर्मेण सकामान् सुहृदः कुरु॥

× × ×

एभिश्च सचिवैः सार्धं शिरसा याचितो मया।
भ्रातुः शिष्यस्य दासस्य प्रसादं कर्तुमर्हसि॥

(Vāl. II. 101. 10, 12)

"Oh, one giving respect to all traditionally as well as being a deserving candidate, you are the proper successor of the kingdom. Therefore justice demands that accept you the kingship and fulfil the cherished desire of your friends. I am a brother, disciple and a servant to you. Alongwith these ministers I request you with my head bent at your feet to have mercy on me."

Saying so Bharata fell down at the feet of Śrī Rāma with tears in his eyes and proposed his coronation. Then Śrī Rāma while explaining the weight of father's orders reproducing scriptural injunctions, tried to convince Bharata to have the kingdom but he was not satisfied. He said—"Who can be a match to you oh Lord? To you pleasure and pain, respect and disrespect, censure and praise—all are equal. He who has knowledge as you have, will not be perturbed even in a period of crisis but I am not so. Thus I make repeated requests at your feet to be kind. You are exalted one among men. Wash out the blot on me, my mother and save father from ignominy etc.

After Bharata said so, all *Ṛtviks,* the inhabitants of capital, leaders of different groups and the mothers, weeping and almost unconscious praised Bharata and requested Śrī Rāma as per their capacity to go back.

After that Śrī Rāma again gave almost a discourse on ethics and religion and canvassed his case but even after the end of discussion when Śrī Rāma did not agree then Bharata became sad and said "Till my lord is not pleased with me, I will go on fast and sit before him. "Saying so he spread some *Kuśa* on the ground and sat thereon. Then Śrī Rāma again made an effort to convince Bharata and said— Brother this act of yours is against *Dharma.* So give up this stubornness. Bharata got up and said to the audience—"If it is necessary for him to stay in the forest for implementing

the father's order, I will be living in the forest in his place for fourteen years. Then Śrī Rāma again explained to Bharata—"Brother Bharata, we do not have a right to make an exchange. After that Śrī Rāma said before all—

जानामि भरतं क्षान्तं गुरुसत्कारकारिणम्।
सर्वमेवात्र कल्याणं सत्यसन्धे महात्मनि॥
अनेन धर्मशीलेन वनात् प्रत्यागतः पुनः।
भ्रात्रा सह भविष्यामि पृथिव्याः पतिरुत्तमः॥
वृतो राजा हि कैकेय्या मया तद्वचनं कृतम्।
अनृतान्मोचयानेन पितरं तं महीपतिम्॥

(Vāl. II. 111. 30—32)

"I know Bharata is most forbearing and respectful to the elders. This truthful *Mahātmā* has all benedictory merits. When I will come back after completing the exilement period, then I will take charge of the universal kingdom of the earth with this religious minded brother of mine. Kaikeyī asked boons from the king. I decided to obey his orders. Therefore brother Bharata, today you implement and free the father, the emperor, from the falsehood."

By hearing this horripilating dialogue and witnessing loveful conduct, of the two brothers who were endowed with matchless glory all great sages alongwith the congregation were amazed and spell bound. The invisible sages in the sky and the great sages bodily present there praised very much the two brothers.

After this all the sages asked Bharata to accept what Rāma said. Rāma was pleased with this but

Bharata still was not satisfied. He in his faltering voice said to Śrī Rāma with his hands folded—"*Ārya,* I am incapable of safeguarding this kingdom. You please. accept this kingdom and then give to somebody else its charge. So saying Bharata fell down at his feet. Then Śrī Rāma lifted him and seated in his lap and spoke very sweetly.

आगता त्वामियं बुद्धिः स्वजा वैनयिकी च या।
भृशमुत्सहसे तात रक्षितुं पृथिवीमपि॥

(Vāl. II. 112. 16)

"Dear brother the wisdom which you have got by birth and as a result of humility, is sufficient for you to guard fully even the whole earth."

Hearing the loveful and educative words of Śrī Rāma effulgent like sun and seeing his firm attitude Bharata said—

अधिरोहार्य पादाभ्यां पादुके हेमभूषिते।
एते हि सर्वलोकस्य योगक्षेमं विधास्यतः॥

(Vāl. II. 112. 21)

"*Ārya,* these are two sandles bedecked with gold. Keep your feet on them. These will maintain the well being of the whole world."

Blessed are Bharata's loftiest sentiments. The Lord Rāma put his auspicious feet on them and handed them over to Bharata.

Saluting those sandals Bharata said to Śrī Rāma—

चतुर्दश हि वर्षाणि जटाचीरधरो ह्यहम्॥
फलमूलाशनो वीर भवेयं रघुनन्दन।
तवागमनमाकाङ्क्षन् वसन् वै नगराद् बहिः॥

तव पादुकयोर्न्यस्य राज्यतन्त्रं परंतप।
चतुर्दशे हि सम्पूर्णे वर्षेऽहनि रघूत्तम॥
न द्रक्ष्यामि यदि त्वां तु प्रवेक्ष्यामि हुताशनम्॥

(Vāl. II. 112. 23—26)

"Oh! Brave! Oh! delight of Raghus! I will also have matted locks and the bark garments, will eat fruits and roots and longing for your return all the fourteen years I will stay out of the city.

Oh! Scorcher of the foes! For this period the entire responsibility of administration will lie upon your sandals. Oh! Best among the Raghus, if I do not see you the same day after completion of fourteen years then I will enter the inflamed fire."

Having heard this vow of Bharata Lord Rāma gladly approved of it. After that Śrī Rāma instructed the two brothers to behave well with Kaikeyī and embraced them to his bosom sent them off. At that time Śrī Rāma had his eyes filled with tears due to the separation of Bharata. After that holding the sandals of the Lord on his head Bharata mounted gladly on the chariot. He met Bharadwāja on the way and reported everything to him. With his permission he reached Shringverapur and from there to Ayodhya. He kept the mothers in the palace and addressed the elders as—

नन्दिग्रामं गमिष्यामि सर्वानामन्त्रयेऽत्र वः।
तत्र दुःखमिदं सर्वं सहिष्ये राघवं विना॥
गतश्चाहो दिवं राजा वनस्थः स गुरुर्मम।
रामं प्रतीक्षे राज्याय स हि राजा महायशाः॥

(Vāl. II. 115. 2-3)

"Now I will go to Nandigram for which I beseech your permission. It is a matter of great regret that the king departed for heaven and my most venerable *Guru* Śrī Rāma is in the forest. So living there I will endure all sufferings caused by separation from Rāma and for Śrī Rāma to take over the charge of kingdom as Śrī Rāma of high fame alone is the king of us all."

Having heard Bharata so saying, Vasiṣṭhajī and the ministers said—

सुभृशं श्लाघनीयं च यदुक्तं भरत त्वया।
वचनं भ्रातृवात्सल्यादनुरूपं तवैव तत्॥
नित्यं ते बन्धुलुब्धस्य तिष्ठतो भ्रातृसौहृदे।
मार्गमार्यं प्रपन्नस्य नानुमन्येत कः पुमान्॥

(Vāl. II. 115. 5-6)

"What you said inspired by brotherly love is worth praising. Really it is worthy of you alone. You are always eager to see your brother, engrossed always in doing good to him and treading on the noble path, so who will not approve of your ideas?"

After obtaining permission of all, holding the sandals of Śrī Rāma on his head, Bharata alongwith Śatrughna went to Nandigram. There getting down from the chariot he said to the elders—

एतद्राज्यं मम भ्रात्रा दत्तं संन्यासमुत्तमम्।
योगक्षेमवहे चेमे पादुके हेमभूषिते॥

× × ×

छत्रं धारयत क्षिप्रमार्यपादाविमौ मतौ।
आभ्यां राज्ये स्थितो धर्मः पादुकाभ्यां गुरोर्मम॥

भ्रात्रा तु मयि संन्यासो निक्षिप्तः सौहृदादयम्।
तमिमं पालयिष्यामि राघवागमनं प्रति॥
क्षिप्रं संयोजयित्वा तु राघवस्य पुनः स्वयम्।
चरणौ तौ तु रामस्य द्रक्ष्यामि सहपादुकौ॥
ततो निक्षिप्तभारोऽहं राघवेण समागतः।
निवेद्य गुरवे राज्यं भजिष्ये गुरुवर्तिताम्॥
राघवाय च संन्यासं दत्त्वेमे वरपादुके।
राज्यं चेदमयोध्यां च धूतपापो भवाम्यहम्॥

(Vāl. II. 115. 14, 16—20)

"My brother has given me this kingdom in the form of a sacred trust. These sandals embellished with gold can maintain the *Yogakṣema* of all and sundry. I regard them as the very feet of *Ārya* Śrī Rāma. You are requested to put royal umbrella over them immediately. *Dharma* will prevail by the influence of these sandals alone. He entrusted me as a token of his love with this priceless trust. Therefore I will look after it till he returns. And when he comes I will put them in his feet, have *Darśana* of those feet bedecked with these sandals. As soon as Śrī Rāma comes I will offer this kingdom to him and will feel myself lighter. I will engage myself in serving him as per his instructions and under his subordination. By ret· · ..ng these sandals, this kingdom as well as Ayodhya to Śrī Rāma, I will get free from the burden and sins also."

Thereafter the steadfast Bharata lived in Nandigram as an ascetic in the garment of bark and matted locks on his head. He did all administrative jobs only after presenting them before the sandals. Over them he

himself put umbrella and moved chowry around them. This way he performed coronation of the sandals. Whatever state affair happened to come or even any valuable presents came, he first put them before the sandals and only after that did the needful.

× × ×

After victory over Lanka and giving the kingdom thereof to Vibhīṣaṇa Śrī Rāma was ready along with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa to start for Ayodhya. Then Vibhīṣaṇa requested him to take bath and put on ornaments. Then Rāma remembering the devotion of Bharata said—

स तु ताम्यति धर्मात्मा मम हेतोः सुखोचितः।
सुकुमारो महाबाहुर्भरतः सत्यसंश्रयः॥
तं विना कैकयीपुत्रं भरतं धर्मचारिणम्।
न मे स्नानं बहु मतं वस्त्राण्याभरणानि च॥

× × ×

तं तु मे भ्रातरं द्रष्टुं भरतं त्वरते मनः॥

(Vāl. VI. 121. 5-6, 18)

"The truthful, righteous, large armed, and tender Bharata, although deserving all luxury, suffers inconvenience on my account. Without that pious Bharata, the son of Kaikeyī, I do not relish any bath raiment or ornamentation. My heart is craving for seeing Bharata. This shows how much love Bharata had for Śrī Rāma.

Then Śrī Rāma with Sītā accompanied by the group, started for Ayodhya, in the aircraft Puṣpaka. Reaching the hermitage of Bharadvāja, Śrī Rāma sent

Hanumān to his beloved brother Bharata to deliver to him the welcome massage of his arrival. Hanumān when reached he saw—

ददर्श भरतं दीनं कृशमाश्रमवासिनम्।
जटिलं मलदिग्धाङ्गं भ्रातृव्यसनकर्शितम्॥
फलमूलाशिनं दान्तं तापसं धर्मचारिणम्।
समुन्नतजटाभारं वल्कलाजिनवाससम्॥
नियतं भावितात्मानं ब्रह्मर्षिसमतेजसम्।
पादुके ते पुरस्कृत्य प्रशासन्तं वसुंधराम्॥

(Vāl. VI. 125. 30—32)

Bharata is living in a hut out of town. His body has thinned in the separation of his brother. It has become dirty. His face is dry presenting a sorry figure. He eats only fruits and roots. He has his senses controlled. He is having a load of matted locks and putting on bark and deer skin as his clothes and practising penance observing rules of piety. His mind is fully controlled and he is absorbed in meditation. He is effulgent like a *Brahmarṣi*. While adoring Śrī Rāma's sandals, he is ruling over the globe. "Hanumān also observed that impressed by Bharata's love and behaviour, his ministers, priest and chief personnels of the army in their saffron clothes, remain by his side. Hanumān. The son of wind god, reported this news of Śrī Rāma's arrival.

Having heard through Hanumān about Rāma's arrival Bharata was excessively joyful. He lost his body consciousness. After a while when he regained normalcy, he embraced Hanumān and drenching him

with his tears, he said—

देवो वा मानुषो वा त्वमनुक्रोशादिहागतः।
प्रियाख्यानस्य ते सौम्य ददामि ब्रुवतः प्रियम्॥
(Vāl. VI. 125.43)

बहूनि नाम वर्षाणि गतस्य सुमहद्वनम्।
श्रृणोम्यहं प्रीतिकरं मम नाथस्य कीर्तनम्॥
(Vāl. VI. 126.1)

"What are you—some god or human being showing kindness on me? You gave me a most happy message. In exchange for this I can give any thing you like. Many years have passed since my Lord went to the forest. Only today I hear this auspicious news about my Lord."

After this Bharata enquired about how the friendship between Śrī Rāma and the monkeys materialised. In reply Hanumān narrated all incidents right from the visit by Śrī Rāma to the forest upto meeting with Bharadvāja on the way from Lanka to Ayodhya. Knowing this Bharata was extremely pleased and he instructed Śatrughna to inform the capital about Śrī Rāma's coming and decorate the town and be prepared to receive him. With this news spread, the entire capital waved with joy and love. All were waiting for Lord's arrival. Bharata, the knower of *Dharma*, bedecked the sandals of Śrī Rāma with beautiful garlands,kept them on his head. A golden umbrella he applied to it and he moving chowry over them, went ahead. After covering some distance when he did not see Śrī Rāma coming, with a pang of love

he asked Hanumān what is the matter? *Ārya* Śrī Rāma, the ornamentation of Raghu dynasty is not sighted so far." In the mean time Bharata saw the air craft coming and bade his *Praṇāma* with devotion to Śrī Rāma, sitting in it. Then the plane landed as ordered by Rāma. Bharata was filled with joy to see Śrī Rāma in it and again fell at his feet. Having seen his brother Bharata after such a long time, Śrī Rāma raised him, seated him in his lap and embraced. After that Bharata met Lakṣmaṇa and saluted the feet of Sītā.

Thereafter the knower of *Dharma* Śrī Bharata put those sandals of Rāma to his feet and requested with folded hands—

एतत्ते सकलं राज्यं न्यासं निर्यातितं मया॥
अद्य जन्म कृतार्थं मे संवृत्तश्च मनोरथः।
यत्त्वां पश्यामि राजानमयोध्यां पुनरागतम्॥

(Vāl. VI. 127. 55-56)

"Today I have returned your kingdom as a trust with me to you. Today my life became fruitful, all my desires are fulfilled that I am seeing you come back to Ayodhya." etc.

The demon king Vibhīṣaṇa and monkeys like Sugrīva were shedding tears from their eyes to watch brother-loving Bharata saying so. After Śrī Rāma was consecrated on the throne, Bharata also like Lakṣmaṇa remained in the service of Śrī Rāma. After some time Śrī Rāma having heard from Bharata's maternal uncle, sent Bharata there to subdue the *Gandharvas*. Just in order to implement the orders of Śrī Rāma Bharata went there

and conquered *Gandharvas*. Again as per orders of Śrī Rāma he enthroned his sons in that kingdom and came back soon to the lord and reported everything to Śrī Rāma. Having received the report Śrī Rāma praised Bharata and was very much pleased with him.

Finally when Śrī Rāma expelled Lakṣmaṇa and desired to go to his ultimate abode, he desired to coronate Bharata on the throne but Bharata spurned the offer. He instantly came into a swoon as soon as he heard this. When he came to normalcy, condemning the kingdom he said—

सत्येनाहं शपे राजन् स्वर्गभोगेन चैव हि।
न कामये यथा राज्यं त्वां विना रघुनन्दन॥

(Vāl. VII. 107. 6)

"I hereby swear by truth and the heaven O king, that being away from you I do not want the kingdom."

Then on the advice of Bharata he enthroned Kuśa and Lava, summoned Śatrughna and departed alongwith all for his supreme abode.

Really speaking Bharata's devotion to Śrī Rāma was without parallel in the history of the world. His renunciation, self restraint, vow and regulated life— all are praiseworthy and imitable. From his life selflessness, humility, endurance, serenity, simplicity, forbearance, dispassion and faithfulness— all these qualities can be learnt. Such a fine example of living a household life with nonattachment and rearing the subjects is difficult to find anywhere else.

Śatrughna, Attendant of the Attendant of Śrī Rāma

The life of Śatrughna also is unique and of its own type. In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Śatrughna also is said to be a partial incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu but it is proved from his life that he was a forerunner among the devotees of Śrī Rāma. Śatrughna was a silent worker, loveful, of good conduct, reticent, truth speaking, dispassionate, simple, splendrous, obedient to the elders and brave. No detailed account in regard to him is available in *Rāmāyaṇa*. But whatever we find there, from that we can infer his greatness to some extent. Right from his childhood he was attached to Bharata, therefore the activities of Bharata and his own run side by side. This is why in *Rāmāyaṇa* nothing particularly has been said about him. One should imagine of his character and qualities from that of Bharata.

In *Bālakāṇḍa* while describing his loving nature it is said—

अथैनं पृष्ठतोऽभ्येति सधनुः परिपालयन्।
भरतस्यापि शत्रुघ्नो लक्ष्मणावरजो हि सः॥

(Vāl. I. 18. 32)

"Just as Lakṣmaṇa with bow in his hand followed Śrī Rāma safeguarding him, in the same way Śatrughna the younger brother of Lakṣmaṇa followed Bharata."

When all brothers were married in Janakapur and

thereafter they came to Ayodhya; after few days Yudhājit the maternal uncle of Bharata when took him to his country, Śatrughna also accompanied him at that time unmindful of his parents, brothers and friends and even newly wedded wife, he decided as his best duty to stay with Bharata. When again received call from Ayodhya he returned with Bharata. When he came to Ayodhya and learnt from the mother Kaikeyī of his father's demise and the exilement of Rāma and Sītā with Lakṣmaṇa he was extremely pained. He was aware to the valour of his brother Lakṣmaṇa. Therefore with a heavy heart and in an amazing tone he said to Bharata—

गतिर्यः सर्वभूतानां दुःखे किं पुनरात्मनः।
स रामः सत्त्वसम्पन्नः स्त्रिया प्रव्राजितो वनम्॥
बलवान् वीर्यसम्पन्नो लक्ष्मणो नाम योऽप्यसौ।
किं न मोचयते रामं कृत्वापि पितृनिग्रहम्॥

(Vāl. II. 78. 2-3)

"He who is a prop to all creatures of the world not to talk of his own person; the same mightiest Śrī Rāma, oh, *Ārya*! has been sent to the forest alongwith his wife? (how regretful). How is it so that Lakṣmaṇa who is full of valour and prowess did not overpower the father and mother and release Śrī Rāma from the crisis?"

While this conversation was going on and Śatrughna was charged with sorrow and fury, in the mean time a door keeper who was himself perplexed with the separation of Rāma informed him—"The cruel and sinful Mantharā due to whose conspiracy Śrī Rāma has

been sent to the forest, is standing fully bedecked with clothes and ornaments." Having so heard Śatrughna got infuriated. He caught her by her braid and started dragging her in the courtyard. Watching this scene the other maid friends of Mantharā thought that without taking the shelter of kind Kausalyā Śatrughna would not spare even them. Thus they at once ran up to Kausalyā. Kaikeyī came to her rescue but Śatrughna rebuked her also. Eventually Bharata came and admonished Śatrughna that females are always immune from killing and he said this much also—

इमामपि हतां कुब्जां यदि जानाति राघवः।
त्वां च मां चैव धर्मात्मा नाभिभाषिष्यते ध्रुवम्॥

(Vāl. II. 78. 23)

"Oh brother, if this hunchbacked woman is killed at your hands then as soon as the righteous Śrī Rāma comes to know this, he will not speak to us—you or me. Hearing Bharata say so Śatrughna left her in the same unconscious state."

In this episode the main point to understand is what respect the women commanded in Rāma's religious ethical notion due to which they were unpunishable in any condition. The second thing is that even aggrieved Bharata in such circumstances also stopped the younger brother from doing *Adharma* by simply convincing. The third thing is that even the furious Śatrughna obeyed him. After that when Bharata went to the forest in order to get Rāma back, Śatrughna accompanied him. Reaching Chitrakoot Śatrughna by

the order of Bharata searched the hutment of Śrī Rāma, When Bharata saw Śrī Rāma and rushed towards him Śatrughna also followed him. The poet has said—

शत्रुघ्नश्चापि रामस्य ववन्दे चरणौ रुदन्।
तावुभौ च समालिङ्ग्य रामोऽप्यश्रूण्यवर्तयत्॥

(Vāl. II. 99. 40)

"Śatrughna also adored Śrī Rāma's feet while weeping. Śrī Rāma took them both to his bosom and shed tears." After that Śatrughna met his brother Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā with great love.

All gathered together; discussion started. There during the dialogue between Śrī Rāma and Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna were not needed. Śatrughna had dedicated his life to Bharata, the servant of Rāma. Therefore whatever was necessary to be said about Śatrughna. Bharata himself said it.

While coming back to Ayodhya with sandals both the brother's made circumambulation of Rāma and bade their *Praṇāma* to his feet and met him. Like Lakṣmaṇa, Śatrughna also was of hot temper. In his mind there was anger for Kaikeyī Śrī Rāma knew it. This is why while seeing them off Śrī Rāma instructed Śatrughna with parental affection and said—

मातरं रक्ष कैकेयीं मा रोषं कुरु तां प्रति।
मया च सीतया चैव शप्तोऽसि रघुनन्दन॥

(Vāl. II. 112. 27-28)

"Oh Śatrughna, the delight of Raghus! You are sworn by me and Sītā to serve mother Kaikeyī. Never show anger to her."

This also shows how much love Śatrughna had for Śrī Rāma.

After this coming back to Ayodhya with Bharata, he always took proper care of the kingdom and family as well. Śatrughna invariably remained with Bharata and waited upon him. Bharata also had full reliance on him. This is why he always ordered Śatrughna for any job big or small.

After this we find in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* almost nothing in regard of Śatrughna till Rāma returns to Ayodhya. When Bharata heard from Hanumān that Śrī Rāma was coming, he communicated it to Śatrughna and it was Śatrughna who made all arrangements such as reception to Śrī Rāma, decorating the town and getting the roads repaired etc. After the coronation also he always shared the responsibility with Bharata in serving Śrī Rāma. Being brothers Bharata had equal right over Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna yet he preferred to get all his jobs done by Śatrughna alone.

Afer the exilement of Sītā one day many sages approached Rāma and described the atrocities perpetrated by Lavaṇāsura. Śrī Rāma consoled and assured them (to do the needful). He put up a question in the court about who would go to vanquish Lavaṇāsura, who might be deputed—Bharata or Śatrughna Bharata offered him to go and kill Lavaṇāsura. Having heard Bharata say so Śatrughna got up from his seat and said saluting Rāma—

कृतकर्मा महाबाहुर्मध्यमो रघुनन्दन॥

आर्येण हि पुरा शून्या त्वयोध्या परिपालिता।
सन्तापं हृदये कृत्वा आर्यस्यागमनं प्रति॥
दुःखानि च बहूनीह अनुभूतानि पार्थिव।
शयानो दुःखशय्यासु नन्दिग्रामे महायशाः॥
फलमूलाशनो भूत्वा जटी चीरधरस्तथा।
अनुभूयेदृशं दुःखमेष राघवनन्दनः॥
प्रेष्ये मयि स्थिते राजन्न भूयः क्लेशमाप्नुयात्।
(Vāl. VII. 62. 11—15)

"Oh, Lord of Raghus! The middle brother has rendered services to you a lot as even though being tortured with the pangs of separation from you he did protect Ayodhya in your absence while waiting for your arrival. Oh king! Bharata of the great fame, has passed the period of your separation in Nandigram, sleeping on grass-bed, eating fruits and roots, having matted locks and wearing bark garments. After having gone through such tortures, he suould not be entrusted with such a job of killing Lavaṇāsura particularly when I, a servant, am present."

When Śatrughna said so, Śrī Rāma spoke—

एवं भवतु काकुत्स्थ क्रियतां मम शासनम्।
राज्ये त्वामभिषेक्ष्यामि मधोस्तु नगरे शुभे॥
निवेशय महाबाहो भरतं यद्यवेक्षसे।
शूरस्त्वं कृतविद्यश्च समर्थश्च निवेशने॥
राज्यं प्रशाधि धर्मेण वाक्यं मे यद्यवेक्षसे।
उत्तरं च न वक्तव्यं शूर वाक्यान्तरे मम॥
(Vāl. VII. 62. 16-17, 20)

"Be it so, my brother, Do implement my orders. I, here by, coronate you on the throne of Madhu's beautiful township. If you don't like Bharata to be

troubled, it is good, Let him stay here. You are also wise, brave and skilled in establishing township. If you wish to obey my command, do rule over that country righteously. You should make no counter reply against this order of mine, brave one" Śatrughna felt shy to hear these words of Śrī Rāma and he spoke in subdued voice—

अधर्मं विद्म काकुत्स्थ अस्मिन्नर्थे नरेश्वर।
कथं तिष्ठत्सु ज्येष्ठेषु कनीयानभिषिच्यते॥
अवश्यं क़रणीयं च शासनं पुरुषर्षभ।
तव चैव महाभाग शासनं दुरतिक्रमम्॥
त्वत्तो मया श्रुतं वीर श्रुतिभ्यश्च मया श्रुतम्।
नोत्तरं हि मया वाच्यं मध्यमे प्रतिजानति॥
व्याहृतं दुर्वचो घोरं हन्तास्मि लवणं मृधे।
तस्यैवं मे दुरुक्तस्य दुर्गतिः पुरुषर्षभ॥
उत्तरं न हि वक्तव्यं ज्येष्ठेनाभिहिते पुनः।
अधर्मसहितं चैव परलोकविवर्जितम्॥
सोऽहं द्वितीयं काकुत्स्थ न वक्ष्यामीति चोत्तरम्।

(Vāl. VII. 63. 2—7)

"Oh, your Majesty! How is it proper to enthrone the junior while seniors are present? I smell irreligion in it. On the other hand I must obey you as it is a great sin to overrule your order, Oh *Puruṣottama*. The same I have heard from you as well as the scriptures. Therefore, when Bharata offered himself for the job, I should not have said anything. But as I uttered these wrong words—"I will kill Lavaṇāsura" I am punished for my fault in the form of coronation. O best among persons! After the orders have been passed by elder brothers, I should not make any reply as it is against

Dharma and the other world as well. Therefore, Oh best of Raghus! I will not now make any reply." (I am prepared to follow whatever you say).

What a lofty idea of renunciation. In case of separation from his brother, he takes coronation as punishment. But it is a fact also. Strivers should pay special attention to it.

Even after this, Śatrughna attacked Lavaṇāsura. At that time Śrī Rāma taught him the method how to kill Lavaṇāsura, gave necessary supplies and a big army to him and sent him. Śatrughna passed one night at the hermitage of Vālmīki on his way. The same night Sītā gave birth to two sons Kuśa and Lava, the twins. So that night to Śatrughna proved to be more blissful. Thereafter it took seven days for him to reach the *Āśrama* of Cyavana on the bank of *Yamunā*.

There he gathered necessary information about the routine and valour of Lavaṇāsura from the sage. When Lavaṇāsura set out for the forest on his hunting errand for food. Śatrughna blocked the gate of the town before he came back. Seeing Śatrughna, Lavaṇāsura said—"What of that wretch? Everyday I eat thousands like you. Then Śatrughna introduced himself and expressed his desire to fight with him. Thereafter a terrific battle took place between them. Finally Śatrughna pulled the string of his bow upto his ear and shot through a divine arrow on Lavaṇāsura in his chest. It pierced his chest, entered *Pātāla* and again took its place in his quiver. Gods and sages praised him, the sky echoed with hailing sound and there was a shower of flowers.

Killing Lavaṇāsura, establishing the township of *Madhurāpurī* and making necessary arrangements for the state Śatrughna went to Ayodhya to see Śrī Rāma after twelve years. While coming back he again halted at the *Āśrama* of Vālmīki. There he heard Rāma's life story being sung in a melodious tune. To hear it his heart was filled with pathos. He was pondering over Śrī Rāma throughout the night. He did not get sleep. At dawn he finished his routine, took permission from the sage and started for Ayodhya eager as he was, to see Śrī Rāma. Reaching there he went to Śrī Rāma's palace where he was sitting on the throne like that of Indra. Śatrughna saluted him and said—"O Lord, as per your instructions I killed Lavaṇāsura and got the township built."

द्वादशैतानि वर्षाणि त्वां विना रघुनन्दन।
नोत्सहेयमहं वस्तुं त्वया विरहितो नृप॥
स मे प्रसादं काकुत्स्थ कुरुष्वामितविक्रम।
मातृहीनो यथा वत्सो न चिरं प्रवसाम्यहम्॥

(Vāl. VII. 72. 11-12)

"I have passed the last twelve years with great difficulty keeping away from you O great king, the lord of Raghus! Therefore now I do not want any longer to live there without you. Please be kind to me so that I may not have to live like a motherless child away from you for a long time.

Having so heard from Śatrughna Śrī Rāma said—"You should not grieve, O brave one, it is unlike *Kṣatriya* nature. You must follow your *Kṣatriya Dharma* and look after the subjects. Of course you

may come to meet me from time to time." Śatrughna accepted in a very sad way what Śrī Rāma said. Thereafter he met Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa and saluting them all he set out for *Madhurāpurī*.

After this when the lord was to depart for his Supreme abode then again Śatrughna was called. Śatrughna coronated his sons there and came to Ayodhya. He went to Śrī Rāma, saluted him and said in a choked voice—

कृत्वाभिषेकं सुतयोर्द्वयो राघवनन्दन।
तवानुगमने राजन् विद्धि मां कृतनिश्चयम्॥
न चान्यदद्य वक्तव्यमतो वीर न शासनम्।
विहन्यमानमिच्छामि मद्विधेन विशेषतः॥

(Vāl. VII. 108. 14-15)

"I have come here after coronating my two sons with a firm decision to accompany you, O great king, the Lord of Raghus. Now do not order me otherwise, O brave one, as I do not want to disobey any of your orders. The idea is that I have never disobeyed you therefore you please see that I may not have to do it now."

The Lord Śrī Rāma granted the request of Śatrughna. Śatrughna also went to the Supreme abode with him.

This short sketch of the life of Śatrughna has been presented as available in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Any other *Rāmāyaṇa* or *Purāṇa* has not been taken into consultation. For this reason it is just possible that all his qualities and love may not be exposed before the readers but there is no other way except craving their pardon.

The Ideal Devotee—Hanumān

Śrī Hanumān is the best servant-devotee. He was born as a fragment of wind-god from the womb of Añjanī. Hanumān was a born celibate, very brave, extremely strong, very wise, most skilled, learned, an *Ācārya* of service *Dharma,* entirely fearless, truthful, faithful, the knower of the Lord's reality, secrets, qualities and influence, quite dispassionate, accomplished, the great loving devotee and a *Mahātmā* of good conduct. He was expert in military science, capable of assuming any form he wished. He was fond of the name, the qualities, form and nature and the sports of the Lord. It is said that wherever there is *Kathā* or *Kīrtana* of Śrī Rāma, Hanumān is present there in a form—this or that. People do not cognise him for want of faith.

Merits of Śrī Hanumān are boundless. How can a man describe the merits of the Lord or His devotees? Howsoever much is said about this, it will fall short. Here an attempt is made to point out briefly his merits through his activities.

For the first time Hanumān met Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa at the *Pampā* lake. We see through this episode that there are qualities unique in him such as humility, scholarliness, cleverness, pridelessness, love and faith etc.

Sitting on the mount Ṛṣyamūka with his ministers, Sugrīva happens to look towards *Pampā* lake. He

finds that two brave persons with bow and arrow in their hands, very handsome, large armed and extremely valorous—are coming to his side. As soon as he saw them he was frightened and said to Hanumān—"Hanumān, go you there and test them. If they are sent by Bāḷi, signal me so that I may flee away from this mount."

Receiving the bidding of Sugrīva Hanumān for his part at once assumed the form of a *Brahmacārī* and went there, saluted Śrī Rāma and made some enquiries. About his queries. Tulasīdāsa writes in his *Mānasa*—

को तुम्ह स्यामल गौर सरीरा। छत्री रूप फिरहु बन बीरा॥
कठिन भूमि कोमल पद गामी। कवन हेतु विचरहु बन स्वामी॥
की तुम्ह तीनि देव महँ कोऊ। नर नारायन की तुम्ह दोऊ॥
जग कारन तारन भव भंजन धरनी भार।
की तुम्ह अखिल भुवन पति लीन्ह मनुज अवतार॥

"Somewhat similar description is found in *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* also. In addition to that Śrī Rāma tells Lakṣmaṇa praising the scholarliness of Hanumān—

"Look Lakṣmaṇa! how beautifully this person in the guise of a *Brahmacārī* speaks! Decidedly he must have studied grammar thoroughly. He spoke so much but without a single fault or error. In *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki Rāma is said to have gone even to the extent to say that he has surely practised all *Vedas* otherwise how could he speak so nicely? Apart from this he praised the merits of Hanumān's speech in many other ways and in the end he says that a king having such an envoy gets so many of his missions accomplished

only through the negotiations by envoy.

In *Rāmacaritamānasa* further description is most loveful.

Lord Rāma introducing himself in full asks Hanumān "Tell me Oh! Brahman, who you are. Having heard this much Hanumān recognised Śrī Rāma and at once fell at his feet. His body was horripilated. No words came out of his mouth. He was gazing and gazing charming countenance and the strange guise of the Lord and drinking the nectar of his beauty. What an unearthly love!. Then composing himself be says to the Lord—

मोर न्याउ मैं पूछा साईं। तुम्ह पूछहु कस नर की नाईं॥
तव माया बस फिरउँ भुलाना। ताते मैं नहिं प्रभु पहिचाना॥
एकु मैं मंद मोहबस कुटिल हृदय अग्यान।
पुनि प्रभु मोहि बिसारेउ दीनबन्धु भगवान॥
जदपि नाथ बहु अवगुन मोरें। सेवक प्रभुहि परै जनि भोरें॥

"What a love and humility! Thereafter he very humbly narrates the condition of Sugrīva, seated the two brothers on his back and took to Sugrīva. There he described every truth regarding both the sides and got friendship established between the two parties, keeping the fire god as witness. After killing Bāli Lord Rāma with his brother Lakṣmaṇa passed his rainy season on the mount Pravarṣaṇa. This side Sugrīva forgot about the mission of Śrī Rāma, entangled as he was in the kingdom, luxury and wife etc. Seeing this Hanumān reminds Sugrīva of the mission of Śrī Rāma according to the diplomatic rules and with the permission of Sugrīva he sends monkey spies to

different quarters and countries. How wise of him!

After this while the discussion for sending monkeys to all quarters for the search of Sītā was going on, the descriptions of that time as it is made in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* tells that Sugrīva extremely relied on Hanumān and Lord Rāma also had full faith in the working capability of Hanumān. At that time in the presence of Śrī Rāma Sugrīva says to Hanumān—

न भूमौ नान्तरिक्षे वा नाम्बरे नामरालये।
नाप्सु वा गतिभङ्गं ते पश्यामि हरिपुङ्गव॥
सासुराः सहगन्धर्वाः सनागनरदेवताः।
विदिताः सर्वलोकास्ते ससागरधराधराः॥
गतिर्वेगश्च तेजश्च लाघवं च महाकपे।
पितुस्ते सदृशं वीर मारुतस्य महौजसः॥
तेजसा वापि ते भूतं न समं भुवि विद्यते।
तद्यथा लभ्यते सीता तत्त्वमेवानुचिन्तय॥
त्वय्येव हनुमन्नस्ति बलं बुद्धिः पराक्रमः।
देशकालानुवृत्तिश्च नयश्च नयपण्डित॥

(Vāl. IV. 44. 3—7)

"O best among the monkeys there cannot be any brake possible to your force either on earth, in intermediary region, in the sky, in the paradise or into the water. You have a thorough knowledge about gods, *Gandharvas*, serpents and men. Besides, you have complete informations in regard of entire world, oceans and also mountains. O great monkey, your speed force and effulgence and smartness are quite just like your father, the wind god. O brave one, there is no living being on this earth who can be a match to your splendour nor will there be any.

Therefore find yourself out some means for getting Sītā back. You are expert in diplomatic art and strength, talent, valour, the delicacy of time and place and proper behaviour, all these are found together in you."

Having heard Sugrīva say so Lord Rāma looked at Hanumān and supposed his mission to have been accomplished. He felt happy within him and gave to Hanumān a ring with his name engraved on it and said—

अनेन त्वां हरिश्रेष्ठ चिह्नेन जनकात्मजा।
मत्सकाशादनुप्राप्तमनुद्विग्नानुपश्यति ॥
व्यवसायश्च ते वीर सत्त्वयुक्तश्च विक्रमः।
सुग्रीवस्य च संदेशः सिद्धिं कथयतीव मे॥

(Vāl. IV. 44. 13-14)

"Through this emblem your credence will be established before Sītā that you have arrived there sent by me. O best among the monkeys! Then she will be able to look at you fearlessly O brave one! Your efforts, steadfastness and valour and the instructions given by Sugrīva all tell me that my mission will be fulfilled through you positively."

In *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* also Śrī Rāma has praised the merits of Hanumān on similar lines. Śrī Rāma after giving his ring to him tells Hanumān therein—

अस्मिन् कार्ये प्रमाणं हि त्वमेव कपिसत्तम।
जानामि सत्त्वं ते सर्वं गच्छ पन्थाः शुभस्तव॥

(A. R. VI. 6.29)

"Only you are the competent for this job. I am fully aware of your valour. Very well. Now go. Be

your jonrney blessed."

After this when Hanumān alongwith the monkeys like Jāmbavān and Aṅgada etc., reaches the sea shore in course of searching Sītā and they fail to find any trace of her and feeling so miserable they sat on fast unto death, then having a talk with Sampāti, the king of vultures they come to know that one hundred *Yojanas* away across the sea there lives Rāvaṇa in Lanka. He has kept Sītā in his *Aśokavana.* Then all the monkeys started discussion how to cross the sea. Enquired by Aṅgada they informed of their capability but Hanumān kept silent. What a sense of pridelessness. This episode in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is given in detail and is most interesting. There Jāmbavān depicted the talent, might, splendour, valour, learning and bravery of Hanumān vividly. He says—

वीर वानरलोकस्य सर्वशास्त्रविदां वर।
तूष्णीमेकान्तमाश्रित्य हनूमन् किं न जल्पसि॥

× × ×

रामलक्ष्मणयोश्चापि तेजसा च बलेन च॥

× × ×

गरुत्मानिव विख्यात उत्तमः सर्वपक्षिणाम्॥

× × ×

पक्षयोर्यद्बलं तस्य भुजवीर्यबलं तव।
विक्रमश्चापि वेगश्च न ते तेनापहीयते॥
बलं बुद्धिश्च तेजश्च सत्त्वं च हरिपुङ्गव॥
विशिष्टं सर्वभूतेषु किमात्मानं न सज्जसे॥

(Vāl. IV 66. 2—4, 6-7)

"O Hanumān, the best among the experts in scripture and matchless one in the monkey world, why

are you sitting alone and are so silent? Why don't you speak? You are equal to Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in splendour and prowess. You are known for your fast speed equal to Garuḍa the son of Vinatā and best among birds. Your arms possess the same valour and splendour which Garuḍa has in his wings. O best of monkeys ! You have unique strength, talent, splendour and courage more than anybody else possesses. Then why don't you realise your real form?"

Thereafter Jāmbavān narrates the tale of his birth and reminds him of his prowess and boon received by him when he was a kid and again arouses the awareness of his power. He says—

उत्तिष्ठ हरिशार्दूल लङ्घयस्व महार्णवम्।
परा हि सर्वभूतानां हनुमन् या गतिस्तव॥
विषण्णा हरयः सर्वे हनुमन् किमुपेक्षसे।
विक्रमस्व महावेग विष्णुस्त्रीन्विक्रमानिव॥

(Vāl. IV. 66. 36-37)

"O best among the monkeys! Get up and jump across the sea. Your speed and valour is certainly greater than any other being. All monkeys are worried and still you are unconcerned. Why so? Your force is so great. Take a leap and cross the sea just as Viṣṇu took three strides (to measure the earth)." Having this much heard, Hanumān enlarged his body for crossing the sea.

In *Rāmacaritamānasa* also we find the same type of description. After consoling Aṅgada, Jāmbavān says therein to Hanumān—

कहइ रीछपति सुनु हनुमाना। का चुप साधि रहेहु बलवाना॥

पवन तनय बल पवन समाना। बुधि बिबेक बिग्यान निधाना॥
कवन सो काज कठिन जग माहीं। जो नहिं होइ तात तुम्ह पाहीं॥
राम काज लगि तव अवतारा। सुनतहिं भयउ पर्बताकारा॥
कनक बरन तन तेज बिराजा। मानहुँ अपर गिरिन्ह कर राजा॥

Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa also gives the same type of description. Besides, after assuming mountain-like form, Hanumān says—

लङ्घयित्वा जलनिधिं कृत्वा लङ्कां च भस्मसात्॥
रावणं सकुलं हत्वाऽऽनेष्ये जनकनन्दिनीम्।
यद्वा बद्ध्वा गले रज्ज्वा रावणं वामपाणिना॥
लङ्कां सपर्वतां धृत्वा रामस्याग्रे क्षिपाम्यहम्।
यद्वा दृष्ट्वैव यास्यामि जानकीं शुभलक्षणाम्॥

(A.R IV. 9. 22—24)

"O monkeys, I will cross the sea and burn Lanka to ashes and vanquishing Rāvaṇa and his kith and kins I will bring Śrī Jānakī back. Or else if you so say I will put a loop around Rāvaṇa's neck, keep Lanka with all its mountains on my left palm and throw before Rāma, or shall I come back after only seeing Sītā endowed with auspicious marks?"

What a self confidence? Then Jāmbavān said—"O brave one! Your mission is only to see Sītā, the one having auspicious mark, alive and come back."

After getting ready to cross the sea, what Hanumān said to the monkeys, shows how much faith he had in *Rāma Nāma.* He knew the glory, effect and reality of Lord Rāma and he had unfaltering love for him. In *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* it is as follows—

पश्यन्तु वानराः सर्वे गच्छन्तं मां विहायसा॥
अमोघं रामनिर्मुक्तं महाबाणमिवाखिलाः।

पश्याम्यद्यैव रामस्य पत्नीं जनकनन्दिनीम्॥
कृतार्थोऽहं कृतार्थोऽहं पुनः पश्यामि राघवम्।
प्राणप्रयाणसमये यस्य नाम सकृत् स्मरन्॥
नरस्तीर्त्वा भवाम्भोधिमपारं याति तत्पदम्।
किं पुनस्तस्य दूतोऽहं तदङ्गाङ्गुलिमुद्रिकः॥
तमेव हृदये ध्यात्वा लङ्घयाम्यल्पवारिधिम्।

(A.R. V. 1. 2—6)

"Look at me, O monkeys, going through the sky like unerring arrow of Śrī Rāma. Today itself I will find Sītā, the beloved spouse of Śrī Rāma, I am blessed. Blessed I am. Now again I will see Śrī Rāma. By remembering whose name only once at the time of death, one reaches His supreme abode, crossing uncrossable ocean of the world, then what is wonder if I, his envoy, having his signet ring with me, and him in my heart, cross this small sea?"

In order to cross the sea, what a terrible form Hanumān assumed, has been described in detail in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. Here it is briefly described. There it is written—

× × ×

ववृधे रामवृद्ध्यर्थं समुद्र इव पर्वसु॥
निष्प्रमाणशरीरः सँल्लिलङ्घयिषुरर्णवम्।
बाहुभ्यां पीडयामास चरणाभ्यां च पर्वतम्॥
स चचालाचलश्चाशु मुहूर्तं कपिपीडितः।
तरूणां पुष्पिताग्राणां सर्वं पुष्पमशातयत्॥
तमूरुवेगोन्मथिताः सालाश्चान्ये नगोत्तमाः।
अनुजग्मुर्हनूमन्तं सैन्या इव महीपतिम्॥

(Vāl. V. 1. 10—12, 48)

"Just as the sea swells on the full moon day, in

the same way Hanumān enlarged his body in order to fulfil the mission of Śrī Rāma. With the intention to cross the sea Hanumān enlarged his body immensely and when he pressed the mountain with his hands and feet, the mountain was shaken for some time. All flowers of the trees on the mountain fell down. Then he took a leap and trees like *Sāla* grown on the mount fell down here and there. On account of the velocity of his thighs many trees were broken and rushed behind him just as the army woned follow a king."

Apart from this, there is beautiful description of the form of Hanumān portrayed. There it is written that at that time the reflection of his body ten *Yojanas* broad and thirty *Yojanas* long in the ocean looked most beautiful. The greatly splendrous, huge bodied monkey in the sky without any support, looked like a big mountain with wings. It indicates his bodily dimensions to some extent.

Mount Maināka requests him to take some rest but before fulfilling the mission of the Lord he refused to have any rest, He only touched it and proceeded further.

Tulasīdāsa says in *Rāmacaritamānasa*—

जेहिं गिरि चरन देइ हनुमंता। चलेउ सो गा पाताल तुरंता॥
जिमि अमोघ रघुपति कर बाना। एही भाँति चलेउ हनुमाना॥
जलनिधि रघुपति दूत बिचारी। तैं मैनाक होहि श्रमहारी॥
हनूमान तेहि परसा कर पुनि कीन्ह प्रनाम।
राम काजु कीन्हें बिनु मोहि कहाँ बिश्राम॥

"Demonstrating to Surasā a sample of his talent,

when Hanumān went ahead, he had a look at sea and saw there a huge bodied monster lying on the surface of the sea. To see that demoness with the terrific looking face, Hanumān thought—"It is the same shadow-catching demoness which the monkey-king Sugrīva talked of." So deciding he expanded his body. To see him doing so, Siṁhikā also expanded her mouth and rushed towards him. Then Hanumān contracted his body and entered into her mouth and tore down her vital parts with his nails. This way killing her skilfully and with patience, he proceeded further. What a talent, skill, patience and courage.

In this way crossing the sea he landed on mount Trikūṭa. He felt no fatigue even after crossing the one hundred *Yojana* expanse of sea, that too without any halt or rest. From there he watched Lanka with a scrutinising look from a close quarter. Then he made a mental planning after fully considering all pros and cons about how to enter Lanka and finally decided that it would be proper to make entry during night and in a small form. In the evening when he was entering Lanka in a small form, he was detected by Laṅkinī, the presiding demoness of Lanka. She challenged and kicked Hanumān. Then Hanumān gave her a punch with his left fist, she vomitted blood and fell down instantly. Then she remembered what Brahmā had said and she started praising him and said in the end—

धन्याहमप्यद्य चिराय राघव-
स्मृतिर्ममासीद्भवपाशमोचिनी ।

तद्भक्तसङ्गोऽप्यतिदुर्लभो मम
प्रसीदतां दाशरथिः सदा हृदि॥
(A. R. V.1. 57)

"Blessed I am today that after a long time I have regained the memory of Śrī Rāma that is capable of untying knots of the world and got the company of his devotee which is most difficult to attain that. Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, may abide in my heart always happily."

Unnerved by the blow of Hanumān, when she was some how recomposed, she says—

तात मोर अति पुन्य बहूता। देखेउँ नयन राम कर दूता॥
तात स्वर्ग अपबर्ग सुख धरिअ तुला एक अंग।
तूल न ताहि सकल मिलि जो सुख लव सतसंग॥

"After this Hanumān assumed a small form and visiting the houses of many *Rākṣasas* one after the other in search of Sītā, he finally reached Rāvaṇa's palace. There he saw the wonderful build of the palace of Rāvaṇa and was amazed to see *Puṣpaka* aircraft there. After this when he started his search to identify Sītā and saw the wives of Rāvaṇa, then he described his mental condition which shows how lofty his ideas regarding *Brahmacarya* were; how he disliked to see the wives of others and how pure his sentiments were. According to *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* Hanumān searched every nook and corner of Rāvaṇa's palace but failed to find Jānakī there. At that time while he was on searching errand, he saw many of the women and he felt afraid if he was being irreligious. He thought—"This way if I see others' wives in sleeping condition

(as I am doing) it will spoil my sense of piety of course. I have not looked at them with lustful eyes. No passion has been aroused to see these women. Only mind is the cause of all sensual tendencies—good or bad—and my mind is quite passionless. Besides, there is no other way to search Sītā. To conduct search for a woman it is but natural to look for her among women." It is like only Hanumān to have such noble and lofty thoughts.

Aspirants must take lesson from this and even in most perilous conditions they should not allow any passionate idea to creep in their mind. There is a wonderful and detailed description of Sītā's search in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* out of which a brief introdution is given here.

It is written in *Rāmacaritamānasa* that while Hanumān was roaming through Lanka in search of Sītā he happened to see a beautiful building which carried all the emblems of Śrī Rāma painted. Tulasī plants were enhancing beauty of the place. It caused him to think how saintly people lived there as it was wholly inhabited by demons. At that very time Vibhīṣaṇa wakes up and starts muttering the name of Rāma. Seeing this Hanumān thought that it must be undoubtedly some devotee of the Lord. I must cultivate acquantance with him. There is no possibility of any harm from a saint.

बिप्र रूप धरि बचन सुनाए। सुनत बिभीषन उठि तहँ आए॥
करि प्रनाम पूँछी कुसलाई। बिप्र कहहु निज कथा बुझाई॥
की तुम्ह हरि दासन्ह महँ कोई। मोरें हृदय प्रीति अति होई॥

की तुम्ह रामु दीन अनुरागी। आयहु मोहि करन बड़भागी॥
तब हनुमंत कही सब राम कथा निज नाम।
सुनत जुगल तन पुलक मन मगन सुमिरि गुन ग्राम॥

How should there be a mutually natural love among the devotees of God—this has been beautifully portrayed here. Vibhīṣaṇa says—

तात कबहुँ मोहि जानि अनाथा। करिहहिं कृपा भानुकुल नाथा॥
तामस तनु कछु साधन नाहीं। प्रीति न पद सरोज मन माहीं॥
अब मोहि भा भरोस हनुमंता। बिनु हरिकृपा मिलहिं नहिं संता॥

Hanumān says—

सुनहु बिभीषन प्रभु कै रीती। करहिं सदा सेवक पर प्रीती॥
कहहु कवन मैं परम कुलीना। कपि चंचल सबहीं बिधि हीना॥
अस मैं अधम सखा सुनु मोहू पर रघुबीर।
कीन्ही कृपा सुमिरि गुन भरे बिलोचन नीर॥
जानतहूँ अस स्वामि बिसारी। फिरहिं ते काहे न होहिं दुखारी॥
एहि बिधि कहत राम गुन ग्रामा। पावा अनिर्बाच्य बिश्रामा॥

What a nice sense of humility, incomparable faith, single-minded devotion to God. Thereafter receiving necessary information from Vibhīṣaṇa Hanumān goes to *Aśokavana* and sees Sītā and salutes her in his mind.

There is a detailed description in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* of what type of wisdom and strategies he used in order to meet Sītā in *Aśokavana*. It is written there that he thought of many methods to meet Sītā and finally he very cautiously mounted on a tree dense with leafs and hid himself. From there he surveyed and cast glance in every quarter. In the process his eyes fell on Sītā. After seeing her he infers from various marks that it is Sītā, the daughter of Janaka. There he has

given a vivid description of Sītā's manner of living and her nature. From the ornaments of Sītā he infers that all ornaments talked of by Lord Rāma were present on her person except those that she dropped on Ṛṣyamūka.

In the same way by a minute observation of her beauty and qualities, he decided that it was Sītā without any doubt. He was very much pained to see Sītā suffering that way and he began weeping in his heart.

He exhibits an intelligent planning about how and when to meet Sītā and assure her that he was a devout of Rāma. In the mean time Rāvaṇa arrives there accompanied by many demonesses. He tries to subjugate her by threatening too much but Sītā refused to be subdued. In the end Rāvaṇa goes away. Thereafter demonesses frighten her as they were instructed by Rāvaṇa. At that time Trijaṭā, a demoness, narrates her dream and consoles Sītā. The other demonesses also calmed down after listening to what Trijaṭā said—Sītā starts crying pained by the separation of Rāma.

Then, finding it to be the proper time to meet Sītā, Hanumān according to his pre-decided plan starts narrating Śrī Rāma's life. Sītā was amazed to hear the life of Rāma from 'A' to 'Z'. *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* says that Sītā doubted whether this experience was dream or hallucination. Thinking so she said—

येन मे कर्णपीयूषं वचनं समुदीरितम्।
स दृश्यतां महाभागः प्रियवादी ममाग्रतः॥

(A.R. V. 3. 18)

"Let the great-souled with such a sweet tongue,

appear before me who has opportuned me to hear such nectarine words."

Having heard these words he appears and stands before mother Sītā most humbly and salutes her with folded hands. To see a monkey all of a sudden standing before her Sītā suspected if it was not Rāvaṇa now in this guise who came to deceive her. Thus she clipped her lips looking down with a bent head. Hanumān's words in *Rāmacaritamānasa* are as follows—

राम दूत मैं मातु जानकी। सत्य सपथ करुनानिधान की॥
यह मुद्रिका मातु मैं आनी। दीन्हि राम तुम्ह कहँ सहिदानी॥

Thereafter, asked by Sītā, he narrated how a friendship took place between monkey-king Sugrīva and Śrī Rāma. He then described bodily marks of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa alongwith their characteristic qualities. Śītā was much pleased to hear all this. The description of this episode in *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* is very interesting and in a greater detail.

In *Rāmacaritamānasa* Tulasīdāsa has said in very brief as this—

कपि के बचन सप्रेम सुनि उपजा मन बिस्वास।
जाना मन क्रम बचन यह कृपासिंधु कर दास॥
हरिजन जानि प्रीति अति गाढ़ी। सजल नयन पुलकावलि बाढ़ी॥

After this the greatly splendrous Hanumān, the son of wind god. delivered Sītā the ring given by Śrī Rāma finding which She felt as happy as if she met Rāma himself.

At that time she says to Hanumān—

बूड़त बिरह जलधि हनुमाना। भयहु तात मो कहुँ जलजाना॥

अब कहु कुसल जाउँ बलिहारी। अनुज सहित सुख भवन खरारी॥
कोमलचित कृपाल रघुराई। कपि केहि हेतु धरी निठुराई॥
सहज बानि सेवक सुखदायक। कबहुँक सुरति करत रघुनायक॥
कबहुँ नयन मम सीतल ताता। होइहहिं निरखि स्याम मृदु गाता॥
बचनु न आव नयन भरे बारी। अहह नाथ हौं निपट बिसारी॥

Seeing Sītā so perturbed in this way Hanumān says—

मातु कुसल प्रभु अनुज समेता। तव दुख दुखी सुकृपा निकेता॥
जनि जनैनी मानहुँ जियँ ऊना। तुम्ह ते प्रेमु राम कें दूना॥
रघुपति कर संदेसु अब सुनु जननी धरि धीर।
अस कहि कपि गदगद भयउ भरे बिलोचन नीर॥

After this Hanumān told Sītā with great wisdom how Śrī Rāma loved her and how he suffered from the pangs of separation. In the end he delivered the message—

तत्व प्रेम कर मम अरु तोरा। जानत प्रिया एकु मनु मोरा॥
सो मनु सदा रहत तोहि पाहीं। जानु प्रीति रसु एतनेहि माहीं॥

By hearing such a loveful message of Śrī Rāma Sītā was submerged in love and she had no awareness of even her body. Then Hanumān again said—

उर आनहु रघुपति प्रभुताई। सुनि मम बचन तजहु कदराई॥
निसिचर निकर पतंग सम रघुपति बान कृसानु।
जननी हृदयँ धीर धरु जरे निसाचर जानु॥

After hearing this when Jānakī said—"All monkeys must be like you and demons are very terrific and huge. How will you be able to conquer them I have doubt in my mind." Hanumān exhibited his terrific mountain-like form and showed his prowess hidden so far. Sītā gained confidence to see that. Most cheerfully she granted many boons to Hanumān and

also said that Lord Rāma will always be kind to you. Having this heard Hanumān was engrossed in love and he bade his *Praṇāma* at her feet again and again and said with folded hands—

अब कृतकृत्य भयउँ मैं माता। आसिष तव अमोघ बिख्याता॥

It shows how much and how deep love Hanumān had for Rāma.

It is found in *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* that in the course of conversation when Sītā asked—How will Śrī Rāma cross this ocean with his monkey army and come here then—

हनूमानाह मे स्कन्धावारुह्य पुरुषर्षभौ।
आयास्यतः ससैन्यश्च सुग्रीवो वानरेश्वरः॥
विहायसा क्षणेनैव तीर्त्वा वारिधिमाततम्।

(A.R V. 3. 47-48)

Hanumān said—"The two brothers, the best among men, will mount on my shoulders and come here and the monkey king Sugrīva along with the entire army will come crossing the sea through the sky within a moment."

This episode also shows the might, valour and courage of Hanumān. Thereafter he ate the fruits of *Aśokavana* with the permission of the mother Sītā and with an intention to render some special service to Śrī Rāma, he uprooted the trees and ruined the whole garden. Having received the news Rāvaṇa dispatched a huge army under the command of Akṣayakumāra. A fierce fight took place between the two parties. Showing unique bravery and military skill he without much effort killed the seven sons of the minister Jāmbumālī,

five commanders and also Akṣayakumāra. This episode of fighting proves his might, manliness and military skill. *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*—presents a very beautiful picture of this. Portraying the picture of incomparable valour of Śrī Hanumān it is written there—

तलेनाभिहनत् कांश्चित् पादैः कांश्चित्परंतपः।
मुष्टिभिश्चाहनत्कांश्चिन्नखैः कांश्चिद्व्यदारयत्॥
प्रममाथोरसा कांश्चिदूरुभ्यामपरानपि।
केचित्तस्यैव नादेन तत्रैव पतिता भुवि॥

(Vāl. V. 45. 12-13)

"Hanumān felled some of the demons with his blows, ran over many of them while killed others by punching and tore down many of them with his nails. Some of them he crushed with his chest and others he pressed to death between his two thighs. A number of demons fell down after hearing his roaring."

When Rāvaṇa came to know through the surviving demons that all the seven sons of his minister most of the important figures of demon army, all the five commanders and Akṣayakumāra were all killed then he sent Indrajit to captivate Hanumān. There was a terrible battle between Meghanāda and Hanumān. In the end when Meghanāda shot *Brahmāstra* to bind Hanumān then in order to keep the dignity of Brahmā he allowed him to be bound. He thought that it was beneficial for him to be caught by the demons as he might get a chance to have a talk with demon king Rāvaṇa. With this intention he became motionless. Then demons tied Hanumān with various types of ropes to their best. By so doing *Brahmāstra* became

ineffective. In this way even being free from *Brahmāstra* the clever Hanumān behaved in such a way as if he was unaware of it.

It is written in *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* that Hanumān, after this, was brought in the court of Rāvaṇa. There he saw Rāvaṇa sitting on the throne with all the pomps in the middle of the court. Rāvaṇa became worried to see Hanumān. He was thinking about the identity of this dreadful monkey; was he Nandīśwara, the *Gaṇa* of Lord Śiva in the form of monkey? After a considerable mental debate Rāvaṇa asked Prahasta—

प्रहस्त पृच्छैनमसौ किमागतः
किमत्र कार्यं कुत एव वानरः।
वनं किमर्थं सकलं विनाशितं
हताः किमर्थं मम राक्षसा बलात्॥

(A.R. V. 4. 5)

"Ask this monkey, Prahasta, why he has come here, what purpose he has, where from he has come, why he ruined my garden and killed my demons."

Prahasta asked Hanumān to tell everything truthfully Then Hanumān gave a diplomatic reply. Remembering the Lord in his heart he spoke—

शृणु स्फुटं देवगणाद्यमित्र हे
रामस्य दूतोऽहमशेषहृत्स्थतेः।
यस्याखिलेशस्य हृताधुना त्वया
भार्या स्वनाशाय शुनेव सद्धविः॥

(A.R. V. 4. 8)

"O Rāvaṇa, the enemy of gods, listen clearly. just as a dog steals the pure oblation similarly you have abducted the chaste wife of the overlord of

the universe for your complete ruination. I am the envoy of the same omnipresent Rāma. *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* gives a detailed account of the same. There Hanumān says—

अब्रवीन्नास्मि शक्रस्य यमस्य वरुणस्य च।
धनदेन न मे सख्यं..... ॥
जातिरेव मम त्वेषा वानरोऽहमिहागतः ॥
दर्शने राक्षसेन्द्रस्य तदिदं दुर्लभं मया।
वनं राक्षसराजस्य दर्शनार्थं विनाशितम् ॥
ततस्ते राक्षसाः प्राप्ता बलिनो युद्धकाङ्क्षिणः ॥
रक्षणार्थं च देहस्य प्रतियुद्धा मया रणे।
अस्त्रपाशैर्न शक्योऽहं बद्धुं देवासुरैरपि ॥

.....

राजानं द्रष्टुकामेन मयास्त्रमनुवर्तितम् ॥

(Vāl. V. 50. 13—17)

"No, I am not sent by Indra, Varuṇa or Yama or any other god nor am I a friend of Kubera. I am monkey by birth. Only to see demon-king Rāvaṇa I have come here and with the sole purpose of having a meeting with Rāvaṇa, I ruined the pleasure garden. Your mighty demons went there to fight me out and then I encountered them just to protect my body. None of the gods or demons can bind me with any weapon whatsoever. I allowed myself to be bound only for seeing the demon-king."

Thereafter narrating Rāma's life in brief he described how Sugrīva was befriended and Bāli killed and told that he was there to find whereabouts of Sītā.

Then he exerted himself to admonish and

convince Rāvaṇa by arguments describing the might, valour, influence and glory of Śrī Rāma. In *Rāmacaritamānasa*—Hanumān says—

बिनती करउँ जोरि कर रावन। सुनहु मान तजि मोर सिखावन॥

× × ×

जाकें डर अति काल डेराई। जो सुर असुर चराचर खाई॥
तासों बयरु कबहुँ नहिं कीजै। मोरे कहें जानकी दीजै॥

प्रनतपाल रघुनायक करुना सिंधु खरारि।
गएँ सरन प्रभु राखिहैं तव अपराध बिसारि॥

राम चरन पंकज उर धरहू। लंका अचल राज तुम्ह करहू॥

× × ×

सुनु दसकंठ कहउँ पन रोपी। बिमुख राम त्राता नहिं कोपी॥

× × ×

मोहमूल बहु सूल प्रद त्यागहु तम अभिमान।
भजहु राम रघुनायक कृपा सिंधु भगवान॥

Pointing out the power of Lord Rāma this way, Hanumān says in *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* as again—

विसृज्य मौर्ख्यं हृदि शत्रुभावनां
भजस्व रामं शरणागतप्रियम्।
सीतां पुरस्कृत्य सपुत्रबान्धवो
रामं नमस्कृत्य विमुच्यसे भयात्॥

(A.R. V. 4. 23)

"Give up foolery in the form of animosity Oh Rāvaṇa! and adore Śrī Rāma who is fond of refugees. Taking Sītā in the front and accompanied by your kith and kin (go in the shelter of Rāma). Salute him. By doing so you will get free from all fears."

This way Hanumān said many things beneficial for him. But he did not relish it. He got angry with Hanumān and said—"How are you chatting before me

so fearlessly, O monkey! You are a wretch of the monkeys. I will instantly kill you. This way rebuking Hanumān so much he ordered demons to kill him. Having so heard many demons got ready to kill Hanumān. At that time Vibhīṣaṇa admonished him. It comes in *Rāmacaritamānasa*—

नाइ सीस करि बिनय बहूता। नीति बिरोध न मारिअ दूता॥
आन दंड कछु करिअ गोसाँई। सबहीं कहा मंत्र भल भाई॥

Rāvaṇa said to this—

कपि कें ममता पूँछ पर सबहि कहउँ समुझाइ।
तेल बोरि पट बाँधि पुनि पावक देहु लगाइ॥

पूँछहीन बानर तहँ जाइहि। तब सठ निज नाथहि लइ आइहि॥
जिन्ह कै कीन्हिसि बहुत बड़ाई। देखउँ मैं तिन्ह कै प्रभुताई॥

It is written in *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*—

Having so heard Hanumān thought in his mind that the thing has been set in his favour. On the other side the demons rolled round his tail heaps of cloth soaked with ghee and oil and put fire to the tip. They paraded him in the city and announced with drum-beating that he was a thief and so punished in that way. After going some distance he contracted his body, freed him from bondage and then again assumed a mountain-like form and burnt entire Lanka to ashes.

उत्प्लुत्योत्प्लुत्य सन्दीप्तपुच्छेन महता कपिः।
ददाह लङ्कामखिलां साट्टप्रासादतोरणाम्॥
हा तात पुत्र नाथेति क्रन्दमानाः समन्ततः।
व्यासाः प्रासादशिखरेऽप्यारूढा दैत्ययोषितः॥

(A.R. V. 4. 42-43)

Leaping from one house to the other Hanumān

burnt the whole Lanka alongwith its mansions, palaces and ramparts with his flaming tail. At that time the demonesses ran helter- skelter and climbed on the roofs of the palaces crying Oh! Son. Oh! Darling. It is written in *Rāmacaritamānasa*—

निबुकि चढ़ेउ कपि कनक अटारीं। भईं सभीत निसाचर नारीं॥

× × ×

जारा नगरु निमिष एक माहीं। एक बिभीषन कर गृह नाहीं॥

× × ×

उलटि पलटि लंका सब जारी। कूदि परा पुनि सिंधु मझारी।
पूँछ बुझाइ खोइ श्रम धरि लघु रूप बहोरि।
जनकसुता कें आगें ठाढ़ भयउ कर जोरि॥

In this way he approached Sītā, saluted her and requested for permission to go back to Śrī Rāma. Then mother Sītā said—"Hanumān! I have temporarily forgotten my misery. Now you are also going. Tell me how I shall live without hearing Śrī Rāma's stories. The reply from Hanumān as in *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* is as follows—

यद्येवं देवि मे स्कन्धमारोह क्षणमात्रतः।
रामेण योजयिष्यामि मन्यसे यदि जानकि॥

(A.R.V. 5. 6)

If it is so Oh Devi! and if you are willing, you may mount on my shoulders and within a moment I will have you meet Śrī Rāma.

In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* the description is in greater details. There Sītā makes a reply to this proposal of Hanumān—"I cannot touch an other person on my own accord Oh Hanuman! It will be becoming of Śrī Rāma if he comes with his monkey army here, kills

Rāvaṇa and takes me back. You go. I will somehow hold life for few more days."

In *Rāmacaritamānasa* the words of Hanumān are as—

मातु मोहि दीजे कछु चीन्हा। जैसें रघुनायक मोहि दीन्हा॥

Then Sītā gave her crest jewel to Hanumān to receive which Hanumān was very glad. Thereafter Sītā narrated the incident when Jayanta in the form of a crow struck her with his beak and Śrī Rāma showed anger upon him.

In this way Hanumān returned after saluting her and with her message. He was anxiously eager to see Śrī Rāma. Therefore he very speedily climbed on the mountain. At that time due to the pressure of his feet the mountain rocks went on breaking into pieces. After reaching the loftiest peak Hanumān expanded his body and decided to reach the northern shore by crossing the sea. Taking a leap from a mountain he reached the sky with the force of the wind. That mountain pressed by the legs of Hanumān sank down into the earth with a big bang alongwith the trees and living beings on it. Hanumān advancing ahead through the sky, reached near the north shore and roared by which all quarters reverberated. Hearing that sound all monkeys enthused to meet Hanumān. Jāmbavān felt very happy and he said to them-all—"Hanumān is coming after accomplishing his mission in every respect otherwise he would not have roared like this."

By that time the swift and mountain-like Hanumān jumped down on the peak of mount Mahendra. At

that time all monkeys were joyful and stood surrounding the Mahātmā Hanumān. Hanumān bade his *Praṇāma* to elders like Jāmbavān and met other monkeys with great affection. He reported briefly how he met Sītā and burnt Lanka. In *Vālmīki Rāmayaṇa* this episode also is given in great details.

Hanumān accompanied with monkeys started from there and reached Kiṣkindhā. There in the garden Madhuvana of Sugrīva all monkeys happily drank honey with the permission of Aṅgada. The guards lodged complaint with the monkey king Sugrīva. At that time, when asked by Lakṣmaṇa Sugrīva said—"Brother Lakṣmaṇa! From this I have no doubt that Hanumān has seen Sītā. Hanumān, the best among monkeys, has capacity to accomplish any job, talent, effort, valour and scriptural knowledge—everything. Apart from this He said so many other such things which show the prowess of Hanumān.

Then Sugrīva called Hanumān with all other monkeys at once to him and he was very glad to know their well-being. All together went to Śrī Rāma. At that time in *Rāmacaritamānasa* Jāmbavān says describing the glory of Hanumān—

नाथ पवनसुत कीन्हि जो करनी। सहसहुँ मुख न जाइ सो बरनी॥

There after Hanumān saluted in the feet of the Lord and Śrī Rāma took him to his bosom. Then Hanumān said—Observing the rigid rules of chastity Devī Sītā is fine, I have had her *Darśana*. Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa felt very happy to hear these nectarine words. Feeling the intention of the Lord, Hanumān

reported to him everything about how he saw her and handed over the *Cūḍāmaṇi* given by her to him. That *Maṇi* he took to his bosom which caused his pang of separation to sharpen.

In *Rāmacaritamānasa* while delivering message of Sītā, Hanumān says—

नाम पाहरू दिवस निसि ध्यान तुम्हार कपाट।
लोचन निज पद जंत्रित जाहिं प्रान केहिं बाट॥

And eventually said this much—

सीता कै अति बिपति बिसाला। बिनहिं कहें भलि दीनदयाला॥

Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa describes it in the following way—

अभिज्ञां देहि मे देवि यथा मां विश्वसेद्विभुः॥
इत्युक्ता सा शिरोरत्नं चूडापाशे स्थितं प्रियम्।
दत्त्वा काकेन यद्वृत्तं चित्रकूटगिरौ पुरा॥
तदप्याहाश्रुपूर्णाक्षी कुशलं ब्रूहि राघवम्।
लक्ष्मणं ब्रूहि मे किञ्चिद् दुरुक्तं भाषितं पुरा॥
तत्क्षमस्वाज्ञभावेन भाषितं कुलनन्दन।
तारयेन्मां यथा रामस्तथा कुरु कृपान्वितः॥

× × ×

ततः प्रस्थापितो राम त्वत्समीपमिहागतः।
तदागमनवेलायामशोकवनिकां प्रियाम्॥
उत्पाट्य राक्षसांस्तत्र बहून्हत्वा क्षणादहम्।
रावणस्य सुतं हत्वा रावणेनाभिभाष्य च॥
लङ्कामशेषतो दग्ध्वा पुनरप्यागमं क्षणात्।

(A.R. V. 5. 52—55, 57—59)

While coming back I said to Sītā Devī—"Please give me some credential so that Śrī Rāma may trust me. Then she gave me this *Cūḍāmaṇi* taking out from her hairs. She narrated what the crow did at mount

Chitrakoot in the past and asked me with tearful eyes to report her well-being to you. She asked me to tell Lakṣmaṇa—"Oh delight of the clan, I said some unbecoming words to you due to my ignorance. Kindly excuse me for that and make every effort so that Śrī Raghunātha may liberate me from here. Dispatched by her I have come here to you to deliver her message. At the time of departure from Lanka I ruined *Aśokavana* completely which Rāvaṇa was so fond of and killed so many demons within a moment. I also killed Akṣayakumāra, the son of Rāvaṇa and had a personal talk with him, burnt Lanka from all sides and came at once to you."

Śrī Rāma was glad to learn about Sītā from Hanumān and said—

हनूमंस्ते कृतं कार्यं देवैरपि सुदुष्करम्।
उपकारं न पश्यामि तव प्रत्युपकारिणः॥
इदानीं ते प्रयच्छामि सर्वस्वं मम मारुते।
इत्यालिङ्ग्य समाकृष्य गाढं वानरपुङ्गवम्॥
सार्द्रनेत्रो रघुश्रेष्ठः परां प्रीतिमवाप सः।

(A.R. V. 5. 60—62)

"You have done what is extremely difficult even for gods. O Hanumān, the delighter of wind god! What may I do in exchange for this, I do not know. I am giving to you my all—so saying Śrī Rāma pulled Hanumān to him and gave a tight embrace to him. He had his eyes filled with tears and was immersed in love."

All *Rāmāyaṇas* give a great detail of might, valour, skill of working, courage and sacred love of

Hanumān. In the *Yuddha Kāṇḍa* of *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* also there is a beautiful description of the prowess of Hanumān. Here it is narrated briefly—

One day in the battle many of the prominent commanders of Rāvaṇa were killed. Demons were disheartened. Rāvaṇa was worried to learn of the death of his brother and sons. Meghanāda came in fury to see this. He approached his father, praised his own might and valour, consoled him and came in the battlefield. There he fought the fiercest possible fight and killed so many monkeys. Under the sway of his *Brahmāstra* Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa also swooned and fell down on the ground. The remaining prominent bears and monkeys were worried. Then Vibhīṣaṇa consoled them. He alongwith Hanumān went where Jāmbavān was lying. Vibhīṣaṇa there enquired about his condition then Jāmbavān informing him in regard of his pain and said—"I cognise you only from your voice. I have no strength to open eyes and see. You first tell me if Hanumān, the best of monkeys, is alive or dead. Then Vibhīṣaṇa counterquestioned—"O King of bears! Why are you inquisitive about the well-being of Hanumān instead of asking first for Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa? You did not show so much affection for Sugrīva, Aṅgada, Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa as you showed your concern for Hanumān. What is the reason?" Then Jāmbavān said—

श्रृणु नैर्ऋतशार्दूल यस्मात्पृच्छामि मारुतिम्॥
अस्मिञ्जीवति वीरे तु हतमप्यहतं बलम्।

हनूमत्युज्झितप्राणे जीवन्तोऽपि मृता वयम्॥

(Vāl.VI. 74. 21-22)

"O, demon king listen. I am inquiring about Hanumān for the simple reason that if Hanumān is alive then even this dead army can be enlivened and if he is dead, we are all just like dead even though alive."

After that Hanumān saluted him. A new life came in Jāmbavān when he heard Hanumān's voice. He sent Hanumān to Himalayas describing the characteristic marks of the herb *Sañjīvanī*. As per his instructions Hanumān went to Himalayas and searched for the medicine but since it disappeared he could not find it. Then he uprooted the very mountain, brought it and enlivened the entire monkey army and Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa also were cured.

When Rāvaṇa shot his infallible *Śakti* and in order to save Vibhīṣaṇa, Lakṣmaṇa took it on his own person and imitating human beings he swooned, then Rāvaṇa came to Lakṣmaṇa and tried to lift him but how could he lift him who was the very base of the entire world.

It is written in *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*—

ग्रहीतुकामं सौमित्रिं रावणं वीक्ष्य मारुतिः॥
आजघानोरसि क्रुद्धो वज्रकल्पेन मुष्टिना।
तेन मुष्टिप्रहारेण जानुभ्यामपतद्भुवि॥

(A.R. VI. 6. 12-13)

"At that time when Hanumān saw that Rāvaṇa intends to take Lakṣmaṇa with him, he got angry and struck Rāvaṇa's chest with his bolt-like fist. With that punch Rāvaṇa knelt down. On the other hand Hanumān

easily lifted Lakṣmaṇa and took him to the Lord.

At that time also Hanumān went to mount Droṇa and as before uprooted the mountain and brought there. All *Rāmāyaṇas* describe the unique might, valour, skill and prowess of Śrī Hanumān while sketching this episode.

Rāmacaritamānasa gives a different version. According to that it was the *Śakti* of Meghanāda which caused Lakṣmaṇa to swoon. Therein Hanumān as per the request of Jāmbavān, brought Suṣeṇa with his house and then as demanded by Suṣeṇa went to get *Sañjīvanī* and brought the mountain. The servicing attitude of Hanumān was unique. On account of his services the Lord thought Himself to be indebted. Mother Sītā also said the same. The life of Lakṣmaṇa and all monkeys was saved. In the same way informing Bharata who was upset in the separation of Śrī Rāma, of his arrival he saved his life also.

The description in *Rāmacaritamānasa* reads as—

राम बिरह सागर महँ भरत मगन मन होत।
बिप्र रूप धरि पवनसुत आइ गयउ जनु पोत॥

Watching the condition of Bharata Hanumān says there—

जासु बिरहँ सोचहु दिन राती। रटहु निरंतर गुन गन पाँती॥
रघुकुल तिलक सुजन सुख दाता। आयउ कुसल देव मुनि त्राता॥

In this way as soon as Bharata heard the news of Śrī Rāma's safe arrival a new life ran through him. When asked by Bharata Hanumān introduces him—

मारुत सुत मैं कपि हनुमाना। नामु मोर सुनु कृपानिधाना॥
दीनबंधु रघुपति कर किंकर।..... ॥

What a sense of humility! Hearing this Bharata sprang up to his feet and met him with joy and respect. While describing his joy he said even to this extent—

नाहिन तात उरिन मैं तोही। अब प्रभु चरित सुनावहु मोही॥

In this way Śrī Hanumān served all for which everybody declared himself to be indebted to him. After Śrī Rāma was enthroned, he remained always in his service. The other monkeys and demons went to their respective homes but not Hanumān. When Śrī Rāma performed *Aśvamedha Yajña* Hanumān also went with Śatrughna in the guard of the horse.

The episode of *Aśvamedha Yajña* has been vividly described in the *Pātālakhaṇḍa* of *Padmapurāṇa*. There also the glory of Hanumān has been beautifully described. When the sacrificial horse while visiting from country to country reached the township of Cakrāṅkā, the capital of king Subāhu, then Damana the son of the king caught hold of the horse. The king had so many other brave sons and brothers and the king himself was a brave warrior. A fierce fighting took place between the two parties. In the end the king Subāhu and Hanumān fought each other to the limit. Hanumān repeatedly caused injury and pain to the king, broke the chariot to the pieces, killed the horses and kicked the king on his chest. The king instantly became unconscious and fell on the ground. Due to the kick from Hanumān his ignorance was gone and devotion to Śrī Rāma was aroused in his heart. He saw in his dream--

रामचन्द्रस्त्वयोध्यायां सरयूतीरमण्डपे।
ब्राह्मणैर्याज्ञिकश्रेष्ठैर्बहुभिः परिवारितः॥
तत्र ब्रह्मादयो देवास्तत्र ब्रह्माण्डकोटयः।
कृतप्राञ्जलयस्तं वै स्तुवन्ति स्तुतिभिर्मुहुः॥

(28. 49-50)

"Śrī Rāma is in a sacrificial canopy on the bank of *Sarayū*. So many expert sacrificial priests are surrounding him. The gods like Brahmā and others of crores of universes are standing with folded hands and eulogising Śrī Rāma."

As soon as he saw this dream the king at once realised the reality of Śrī Rāma. He got up from the swoon and walked on foot towards Śatrughna. He announced to stop the fight and said to his sons and relations—

एष रामः परं ब्रह्म कार्यकारणतः परम्।
चराचरजगत्स्वामी न मानुषवपुर्धरः॥
एतद्धि ब्रह्मविज्ञानमधुना ज्ञातवानहम्।

(28. 59-60)

"This Śrī Rāma is supreme *Brahma*, beyond the ken of cause and effect. He is the Lord of the world—mobile and immobile. Even though he is in human coil he is infact not so. It is the Supreme Knowledge to know him in this way. I could know this reality just now." After so saying he narrated to his sons how the sage Asitāṅga cursed him. Then he took the horse and accompanied by his kith and kin went to Śatrughna. He expressed his gratefulness to Hanumān and said—

क्वासौ हनूमान् रामस्य चरणाम्भोजषट्पदः।
यत्प्रसादादहं प्राप्स्ये राजराजस्य दर्शनम्॥

साधूनां सङ्गमे किं किं प्राप्यते न महीतले।
यत्प्रसादादहं मूढो ब्रह्मशापमतीतरम्॥
(29. 32-33)

"Where is that Hanumān who is a bee to the lotus feet of Śrī Rāma? It is by his grace that I will see Śrī Rāma, the emperor of emperors. What remains unobtained after having holy company on this earth? I was a great fool but due to the holy company I have been liberated from the curse of the *Brāhmaṇa*."

After that conquering country after country when the sacrificial horse crossed the territory of king Satyavān, a demon named Vidyunmālī stole the horse and surrounded by his demon soldiers mounted in his aircraft and reappeared in the sky. At that time there a terrific fight took place between the two armies of Śatrughna and Vidyunmālī. At that time Hanumān took a vow to exhibit his valour in full which shows what a confidence in lord Rāma Hanumān had. He regarded himself uniquely powerful only due to the grace of Śrī Rāma. He did justify his vow in battle by showing his wonderful valour. He jumped through the sky and killed the prominent enemy warriors by tearing them down through his nails, some of them he killed with tail while others he ran over and still others tore apart with his hands. When the angry Vidyunmālī threw his effulgent and dreadful trident on Hanumān he caught it through his mouth and broke it to pieces and unnerved him by beating him with slabs. After that Śatrùghna killed Vidyunmālī and Vajradaṁṣṭra

both. The remaining demons made a surrender.

From there he went to and had a meeting with the sage Āraṇyaka. Thereafter the horse reached Devapur. There a fierce battle was fought between Vīramaṇi, the local king and Śatrughna. King Vīramaṇi was a great devotee of Lord Śiva. So Lord Śiva also had come alongwith his *Gaṇas* (attendants) to the battlefield to assist Vīramaṇi. At that time when prince Puṣkala was killed and Śatrughna also was in a swoon, Hanumān showed splendorous valour. He fought fiercely with Lord Śiva, killed his charioteer and crushed his horses and the chariot. When Lord Śiva started fighting mounting on Nandī, then Hanumān unnerved him by striking him with a *Śāla* tree. When Lord Śiva hurled his trident on him, he caught it and broke into pieces. He caused much pain to Lord Śiva with several of his blows and punches and finally coiled him with his tail. Nandī was frightened to see it. In the end when Lord Śiva was greatly perplexed, then pleased with the fighting of Hanumān Lord Śiva said—"You are blessed O Hanumān, a servant of Śrī Rāma. Today you showed exceptional valour. I am pleased immensely. So ask for any boon."

Then Hanumān smiled and said with absolutely no fear —"Maheśwara, by the grace of Lord Rāma I have got everything; yet for your pleasure alone I request you to safe- guard the dead bodies of the soldiers of my side along with your attendants till I go to mount Droṇa and come back with medicine.

Nobody should do any harm to them by cutting them into pieces." Lord Śiva granted his request. Thereafter Hanumān brought the herb *Sañjīvanī* as he had done in Lanka. At first he enlivened prince Puṣkala then removed the unconsciousness of Śatrughna and gave new life again to other warriors. In this way in that terrific battle the life of all was saved due to the valour of Hanumān. Eventually Śrī Rāma himself came there. Lord Śiva motivated king Vīramaṇi to become a devotee of Śrī Rāma.

After this the horse roaming from country to country reached Kuṇḍalanagara protected by King Suratha. The king was a great devotee of Lord Rāma. He stopped the horse just for getting *Darśana* of Śrī Rāma. There took place a great fighting between Suratha and Śatrughna. In that battle when Suratha's son Campaka tied prince Puṣkala and was to take him to the town, at that time inspired by Śatrughna Hanumān went there. Immediately he took up Campaka from the chariot and went into the sky. Campaka started wrestling with Hanumān there also. Seeing the extraordinary valour of prince Campaka, Hanumān caught him by his leg and swirling him round one hundred times threw him on the *Haudā* of the elephant. The prince became unconscious.

The king Suratha saw his son in a swoon and himself came to fight with Hanumān. He sincerely praised the might and valour of Hanumān but at the same time he swore to bind him and take him to his

town. In reply to him Hanumān said—"O king, you always meditate on the feet of Lord Rāma and I also am his servant. If you bind me, my Lord will free me exercising his might. Go on; fulfil your vow, O brave one. They never feel sorry who remember Śrī Rāma.

After such a conversation there took place a terrible fighting between the two. Hanumān broke his fortynine chariots one after the other in that battle. The entire army of the king got nonplussed and the king was amazed. The king praised too much the bravery of Hanumān. The king tried to bind him by *Pāśupatāstra.* People once thought that Hanumān was tied. But remembering Śrī Rāma in his mind Hanumān broke the bondage in no time. The king shot *Brahmāstra* but Hanumān swallowed it. Eventually he took *Rāmāstra,* remembered Śrī Rāma and said—"Lo, now you are bound, O best of the monkeys". Hanumān said—"O king, you have tied me with the weapon of my Lord and not by any other ordinary weapon. Therefore I honour it. Now you can take me to your town."

The talk that took place between the two is pregnant of unique love. Who could tie Hanumān? He got himself willingly bound in order to have the vow of king Suratha fulfilled and the weapon of his Lord honoured.

After that when Hanumān remembered and called Lord Rāma, he came and blessed king Suratha by granting him direct vision. Like this there is a vivid description of Hanumān's glory in *Pātāla Khaṇḍa* of

Padmapurāṇa. Here it is written very briefly.

At the time of departing for his Supreme abode Lord Rāma instructed Hanumān to stay in the world for the ultimate good of the world. As per *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.* Śrī Rāma while departing for his Supreme abode tells Hanumān—

मत्कथाः प्रचरिष्यन्ति यावल्लोके हरीश्वर॥
तावद् रमस्व सुप्रीतो मद्वाक्यमनुपालयन्।
(Vāl. VII. 108. 33-34)

"So long as my life story prevails in the world, O best among the monkeys, move around in the world cheerfully implementing my orders." Hanumān was very happy on what Śrī Rāma said. He said—

यावत्तव कथा लोके विचरिष्यति पावनी॥
तावत्स्थास्यामि मेदिन्यां तवाज्ञामनुपालयन्।
(Vāl. VII. 108. 35-36)

"O Lord! So long as there remains your sanctifying *Kathā* in the world I will be on the earth to obey your command."

In *Dwāpara Yuga* Hanumān gave his vision to Bhīma and Arjuna also. There are so many stories told about him manifesting in *Kaliyuga* also. His merits, glory and greatness have an expansive range. What is written here, is only the tip of the iceberg. One should get benefited by contemplating on his incomparable merits. One should try to inculcate in him the qualities like unbroken *Brahmacarya,* steadfast devotion to God, bravery, patience, manliness, knowledge, courage and wisdom by following his ideals.

Love—a Means

This life may be meaningful only through cultivating unalloyed love in Lord Kṛṣṇa, the charming prince of Vraja. The fortunate fellow who happens to drink the nectar of this divine, singleminded and pure love, gets his life fruitful. His thirst for worldly objects clinging for ages and births after births, gets quenched for ever. The being, scorched with the heat of worldliness gets perfect peace only after having a dip in the Ganges of divine love. This is the only elixir by drinking which the person becomes accomplished, immortal and satiated. After having this love a person ceases to desire any object. He neither grieves nor hates nor gets attracted toward anything nor he has any kind of enthusiasm (for enjoying sense-objects).

Love is a means as well as end of all means. Like God Himself love is also indescribable. Just as a dumb cannot express how an eatable tastes so is this love not a subject of speech. Therefore love is said to be unearthly in its form as it is entirely distinct from the world. The mundane love is not pure since it is alloyed with a desire for worldly enjoyment and evil *Vāsanās*. Where desire rules there cannot be any pure love instead it is infatuation born of attachment. Besides, the objects of worldly love are momentary and perishable and hence such love is very inferior in comparison with divine love. Even love for God, if made due to some desire, is selfish (सकाम) love. Selfish love lacks in divineness, singlemindedness and purity. Desire always seeks a worldly object and therefore,

being mixed with worldliness its divineness is marred and the love is dispersed among desired objects and there remains no singlemindedness and unalloyedness. In the same way the love ceases to remain pure as it is mixed or contaminated with desire. Divine, singleminded and pure love is transcendental to the three modes of nature and desireless. It always grows and knows no diminishing. It is subtler than the subtle. It cannot be expressed through speech and is only a thing to be experienced.

Purpose or desire are blots on love. There is not even smell of any desire in purposeless and desireless love hence it is pure. Apart from Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme beloved; there is no other subject of this love. So it is undivided and as said above, it is entirely different and distinct from the world and is therefore divine.

Obtaining this love the lover is always engulfed in the joy. The worldly concerns cannot even touch him. In his eyes there remains nothing other than love. He visualizes only love, hears only love, describes only love and contemplates on only love. His mind, *Prāṇa* and soul are constantly buzy in fathoming the Ganges of love. He dedicates all his duties and conduct to Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is suffused with love. Even momentary lapses in his remembrances make him restless and perturbed. He sees God everywhere, he sees everything in God. God cannot be away from the eyes of one who has such an angle of vision. He also cannot be away from God.

This way both are in eternal union and nearness. Watching the super mundane love of such a devotee, God forgets that he is supreme ruler and always watches His beloved devotees. He embodies Himself following the wishes of the devotee, plays, dances, sings song and gets enraptured.

A loving devotee is quite unconcerned with either communion or separation. He has got only to love, that too for the sake of love alone. The supreme beloved who knows the reality of love, cannot but meet him. If He feels so, He will come by Himself why should the devotee worry for meeting? Why should he be afraid of separation? After all he does not require any comfort for his own sake. He wants everything for the sake of his beloved. If He finds joy in meeting him He may do so. If He feels pain in separation He should not leave him. He is fond of love. If there will be love He will Himself come running. Or else He will not come even after having been invoked. This is why desireless devotees do not invoke Him. As a matter of fact, it is neither necessary to invite Him nor to stop Him. Only loving God without any desire or purpose is required, unmindful of communion, separation or ego. All efforts should be channelised to enhance the quantum of love. Prahlāda never prayed for granting vision. The Lord did everything by Himself.

A God-loving one should do every act such as worship, eating, drinking, weeping, singing etc., for divine love. The lover should not have any aim other than the loveful God. Vision or communion are only

by products, they will come spontaneously. The perfection of love lies in divine, undivided and pure love itself where love, lover and beloved get identified.

Such a lover is the very embodiment of that love. His tongue is suffused with love and his body and mind are drenched with love. Every hair of his body is seen as if dancing with loveful joy. By conversing with Him, thinking of Him, by being proximity of Him, we get infused the atoms of love inside us. In his contact even the dry heart is filled with the elixir of love. Even the hardened atheists become crazy for love in his contact forgetting everything else. Words fail to explain, to implant in our hearts his undivided love or divine emotions. Whatever we may call it, but it transcends all sentiments.

This love divine cannot be compared with even friendly love. It is a higher emotion even than friendly one. Arjuna is regarded as example for friendly love but even he seems to be lacking in this divine sentiment. He gets terrified to see the cosmic form of the Lord, His friendly treatment and behaviour towards Lord on equal footing, pinches him as a blasphemy and for that he apologises again and again—'तत्क्षामये त्वामहमप्रमेयम्' (*Gītā* XI. 42) and 'पितेव पुत्रस्य सखेव सख्युः प्रियः प्रियायार्हसि देव सोढुम्' (*Gītā* XI. 44) and the Lord also consoles him by saying 'मा ते व्यथा मा च विमूढभावः' (*Gītā* XI. 49) etc.

The sentiment of the singleminded devotee is higher than that of servitude also. In the servitude, there is notion of high and low, master and servant, veneration and adoration etc., but here in this type of love, there

is perfect equality. Nobody is servant and none is master. The sense of veneration or entertainment or fear is totally absent. The devotee feels happy in having a dip into the Ganges of divine love and on the other hand God also feels enraptured by love.

This undivided love is higher than parental devotion also. In parental devotion there is absence of this super mundane equality which is the innate property of this type of lover. In parental love there is a notion of father and son; higher and lower but in this love there is no body bigger and none smaller; none is parent and none is son to anyone. All are equal.

This love is even superior to conjugal love. In amorous relation also we find two types of sentiment—*Svakīyā* and *Parakīyā* (wife-husband and illegitimate romance). The devotional love of a chaste lady toward her husband is *Svakīyā Bhāva* romantic love of a woman towards other person is *Parakīyā Bhāva* which is unopen or secret. Such ardent and pure love in Divine personage will be known as *Parakīyā Bhāva.* The above said lover with his undivided love, transcends even these two relations. He is never separated from God even for a moment. The Lord is subordinated to him as if He is purchased by him. He never leaves his company. That undividedly lover is quite suffused with love. He is not different from God and God is not different from him. In this condition here is no fear nor is there any sense of hesitation, respect or veneration. There is no consideration of superiority or inferiority. Between devotee and God none is better or otherwise. Both are equal.

A chaste lady regards her husband as Nārāyaṇa and herself as his maid. This sentiment is great and benedictory. Still there is difference of ranks. But in above stated type of love there is no ranking bigger or smaller. Both are same and equal.

In paramour love also there is fear from others and secrecy. But in this love-divine no fear or secrecy is there, then what to talk of hesitation? The *Parakīyā* is attracted towards God on account of His merits and majesty. When one regards somebody as superior to him there one naturally feels inferiority in him. In it also there is not fearlessness and full equalness, but in undivided and pure love there is no room for merit and majesty. Even if occasionally they come on the surface of memory they do not have any real value. Here, there is an undescribable equality. There is no praising as omnipotent and omnipresent. The praises and prayers are left behind long back. Now there is no omnipotent and no super ruler. Both are one, equal. Both are lover and beloved to each other. It is causeless and purposeless love between the two. Under such a situation love, lover and beloved—all the three are non-different. Devotion, Devotee and Lord—all become one. It is coroborated by the following words of some devotee—

त्रिधाप्येकं सदागम्यं गम्यमेकप्रभेदने।
प्रेम प्रेमी प्रेमपात्रं त्रितयं प्रणतोऽस्म्यहम्॥

Love, lover and beloved—even though apparently three, are really one. This reality is not understandable to all. They should be taken to be one. I salute the three but one in reality.

In the eyes of such a singleminded lover there kindles the light of love divine always and everywhere. He showers the nectar of love all over the world. There is none to be hated or disliked in his eyes. To him waves of an ocean of love are everywhere.

In the *Jñānamārga*, the *Mahātmās* obtain the non-dual—the undifferentiated *Brahma*—'ब्रह्मैव सन् ब्रह्माप्येति' (*Bṛh.* IV. 4—6) being *Brahma* itself he merges in *Brahma*. But in the realm of love the experiences are uncommon and unique. Neither duality nor non-duality is there. The condition is dissimilar to both. The love between the two is ever growing and ever fresh—'प्रतिक्षण वर्धमानम्' (*N. B. S.* V. 4) every moment getting strengthened and this way it becomes unlimited and unending. The devotee and the Lord are so mixed up that awareness of duality is completely gone. It is impossible to describe this divine sentiment through words; there remains nothing but love. The communion of these two is also unique an unearthly. Here there is duality in non-duality and non-duality in duality. Our two arms when joined become one.

At that time they are one even though being two and vice versa. In this way there is neither difference nor non-difference.

When Gaṅgā joins the ocean, both become one. But the union of Lord with the singleminded lover is distinct from and superior to even this. It is a situation quite unique and indescribable. It is beyond the ken of difference and non-difference and in the form of fruit. This union is eternal.

No obstruction of even clothes or ornaments

is tolerable. Clothes are required to avoid shyness. A person feels shy from others. Here lover and beloved have become one. Does anyone feel shy of himself or herself? In a closed and secluded room where there is no other person, no clothes are required to avoid shy feeling. In this divine union the sense of duality has altogether disappeared; difference appears only in the eyes of others. In such a communion ornaments become blots. There is nothing like respect or veneration or entertainment. Here only love is there and the idea of respect etc. are just obstacles. Does any body pay respect to one's ownself? This situation is the acme of *Gopī's* love.

Under this situation there is no trace of grief, infatuation and fear. There is perfect oneness in spite of seeming difference. Howsoever the singleminded lover behaves outwardly, from within he is committed to one only i. e., he is engrossed in God and therefore ever seated in God. The Lord has said in *Gītā*—

सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः।
सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते॥

(VI.11)

He who with undivided mind, adores Me as present in all beings in the form of *Ātmā*, always transacts in Me alone even though he may act in anyway because there is nothing apart from Me so far as he is concerned.

It is a situation beyond dual and non-dual; difference and non-difference quite indescribable. Acquiring this undivided love for Lord Kṛṣṇa should be the aim of all human beings because therein lies the success of human life.

Love

(1) Everything is a projection of the Divine. He may do as He wishes. There is no reason to feel any emotional upsurge (such as delight or sorrow). When we have no resentment against divine dispensations of God, it reflects our detachment (with the world) and association with great souls expresses our excessive love for God.

(2) After the love registers its presence, then no sooner does one hear any reference of the beloved than the characteristic marks of loveful joy such as horripilation and rolling tears et cetera start appearing.

(3) Even any common man coming from the beloved seems to be very dear. When such is the case in regard of an ordinary mortal beloved that one feels joy by hearing his merits and love then what to talk of the superb beloved God. By listening to Uddhava the *Gopīs* were overwhelmed with love. The same love can develop even now.

(4) The more deficiency in the love, the more delay there will be (in having His vision).

(5) The delay is there because the striver tolerates it. If the separation from the Lord becomes so intolerably tense to the striver and he feels unable to hold his life, then there will no delay in meeting the Lord.

(6) So long as the striver bears the separation of the Lord; so long as he goes on pulling without God, the Lord also thinks well, it is alright with him even without Me, then what is the hurry for me. The day the Lord becomes indispensable, it will equally be impossible for the Lord to stay away from the devotee.

(7) The delay is in longing for Him not in attaining Him.

(8) By loving God with form and having His vision, His attributeless aspect can immediately be known.

(9) There is nobody in the world as lovable as God. He is ever ready to love whosoever desires to love Him.

(10) If one desires to love God, then he should give top priority to Him. There is nobody as friendly, as kind and as well-wisher as Śrī Nārāyaṇa. He is a loving one without match. He loves even wretches and hates none. If somebody feels discouraged to love God as he considers himself to be mean, then there is no way out. But from God's side every body has an open order. However degenerate one may be, if he does *Bhajana* constantly, he can get Supreme bliss by virtue of his adoration. If somebody still closes his eyes and fails to recognize the Divine glory, well, God is not at fault.

(11) The love for God should be as intense that one becomes unable to live without meeting God. One attains God only when he becomes so intensely eager.

(12) A lover of God is the owner of all that is of God.

(13) One must have love for the beloved. It is only love that counts. In the absence of love, meeting has (not much) value.

(14) There should be such a love for God that the mind of the devotee becomes restless.

(15) Contemplation of God is the only means to meet God.

(16) The selfless love for all beings is in fact, the

love toward God as He is the Ātmā of all beings.

(17) Liberation or no liberation, a loveful meditation on God is enough.

(18) The love for God intensifies so much that the devotee cannot leave God.

(19) When through *Nāma-Japa* etc., the dross of the mind is burnt away, it is then that the Divine love germinates.

(20) One must always be eager to be near God. Eagerness is the main source of being always in the proximity of God. There can remain no barrier if the desire is intense.

(21) The Lord meets or not but one must inculcate single-minded devotion speedily.

(22) If one can manage to live in the world while loving God, there cannot be a thing more joyful.

(23) Being restive with divine love while contemplating always on God selflessly, is the real adoration *(Bhajana)*.

(24) Only that *Vidyā* is the real *Vidyā* which leads to generate love for God.

(25) Only those are real scriptures which bring dispassion from the world and love for God.

(26) By intense practice of adoration and contemplation (भजन and ध्यान) the heart gets purified and it is only then that Dhāraṇā (concentration) becomes possible. Every means should be adopted to cultivate—integral love toward God.

(27) One should be absorbed in loveful adoration in a way to become oblivious of body. Then there will

be bliss and bliss alone.

(28) Adoring God while working seems to be difficult only till the love is not intense.

(29) Blessed is he who always contemplates on God out of single-minded love i.e., who always remembers Him. Such a one is indifferent even of *Jīvanmukti*. He becomes worth having a vision of.

(30) No matter even if the life comes to end but the love for God should not be blemished.

(31) Faith is the real thing. There can be no love for God unless there is faith; without love no attainment of God and except attaining God, there is no other way for liberation from the world.

(32) One thinks of world until one is aware of divine glory. After coming to know the divine glory one develops love with ardent faith and then it becomes impossible to think of anything else.

(33) Meeting or no meeting, the love must be there. (One should always think) I am a possession of the Beloved.

(34) One should never miss from his mind the bewitching image of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

(35) When once the heart gets merged in the sweet words and sweet image of the Flute-player having plume of peacock feather, it never comes back. It is caught therein.

(36) When love in God is generated, the mundane love diminishes by itself, no other means is required to get rid of it.

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